The Nation.

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KOPKIND: HEALTH CARE POLITICS See Page 768

EDITORIAL

HAITIANS NEED NOT APPLY

"We've got what they want," Lyndon Johnson once declared in a classic formulation of America's perspective on the rest of the world. U.S. to wretched refuse: Keep out. George Bush, or those who pass for his policy people, restated the proposition this fall as thousands of Haitians fled the tyranny and misery of their afflicted land and headed for Florida over open water in rickety vessels. The Coast Guard intercepted many of the boats and detained the sick and hungry passengers on its spiffy cutters or herded them into the Navy's Guantánamo enclave on Cuba. Hundreds have died at sea, including 135 on one overcrowded boat.

It is the Haitians' misfortune to be labeled "economic" rather than "political" refugees. If the distinction eludes those who normally yoke the two categories as a single fact of society, it makes a loony kind of sense to the State Department. "In Haiti, people are still free to practice their religion and to hold a job—if they can find one," a Foggy Bottom type averred. The Marie Antoinette option is always available.

The injustices are so infamous and the quadruple standards so blatant that it's hard to believe U.S. policy is based on anything more elevated than racism and greed. Of course Representative Charles Rangel is right when he suggests that Bush would never treat Northern Europeans so cruelly. Of course State's argument is silly that Nicaraguan and Vietnamese refugees were let in only because of U.S. "involvement" in (read: devastation of) their countries—the United States has been meddling in Haiti for years.

It's no skin off anyone's back in Washington to let Haitian refugees, economic or political, find safe haven. If we've got what they have been driven to risk their lives to have, why not give them the gift millions of Americans have taken—quite literally—for granted.

PEARL HARBOR DAY IN JAPAN
Karl Taro Greenfeld

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL
Thomas Bodenheimer

PRO-CHOICE IN LOUISIANA
Jen Nessel

THE GREED MERCHANTS
Max Holland

DOWN COMES THE HOUSE OF CARR'S
David Schiff

TIBET'S SACRED ART
Arthur C. Danto

THE COLD TURKEY BOYS

YELTSIN'S AMERICAN 'ADVISERS'

JON WIENER

The end of the cold war posed a problem for American conservatives: After a lifetime of fighting the Evil Empire, they suddenly found themselves threatened by political irrelevance. But several of America's leading cold warriors have found new career opportunities and new reasons to claim the media spotlight: They have become advisers to Boris Yeltsin, helping him bring the blessings of capitalism to Russia. These right-wing ideologues, Republican consultants, former Reagan operatives and old-time hustlers have hyped their influence on Yeltsin in an effort to regain their lost place in the sun of American politics.

The Hoover Institution heads the list of Yeltsin advisers. Probably the world's most notorious bastion of cold war thinking, the Hoover was founded not by J. Edgar but by Herbert, in 1919; he later declared his institution's purpose was to "demonstrate the evils of the doctrines of Karl Marx." Ronald Reagan was named an Honorary Fellow in 1974. The Hoover served as a pipeline to the Reagan Administration; by 1985 fifty of its scholars and former fellows had joined their Honorary Fellow in Washington. When the Hoover team visited Moscow in March, Yeltsin said, according to a Hoover fellow, "Your institute did great work for Reagan. Now do it for me."

The pact signed by the Yeltsin government and Hoover, according to Institution spokeswoman Michele Horaney, is "not a contract; it's a letter of agreement, pledging to find ways to work together. We agreed to be available, to keep the lines of communication free and open. It is not a formal or detailed thing."

(*Continued on Page 778*)

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LETTERS.

R.I.T. LARGE

Rochester, N.Y.
The author of the report reviewed in Bruce Cumings's "C.I.A.'s *Japan 2000* Caper" [Sept. 30] was Andrew Dougherty. He was the assistant to the president of Rochester Institute of Technology; he was never a faculty member here, nor was he hired according to academic standards or with faculty participation. We emphasize that the report was never associated with or endorsed by the faculty of R.I.T. Those of us concerned about the implications of the report and the integrity of R.I.T. concur with Cumings's judgments. However, C.I.A. contract work done at R.I.T. has never contributed more than 1 percent of our operating budget, and *Japan 2000* was not one of those faculty research contracts. A joint trustee-faculty-student review panel is studying the C.I.A./R.I.T. relationship and its implications for university research and governance. Dougherty has resigned, and President Rose has announced his retirement, effective next June. The R.I.T. community looks forward to a full and public review of its relationship with the C.I.A. and to overcoming the controversy. *Joyce Shikowitz Hertzson*
The Faculty Council
Rochester Institute of Technology

NEGROES, HITLER & THE C.P.

Bronxville, N.Y.
Christopher Hitchens writes, "The Communist Party in this country opposed the battle to desegregate the armed forces in World War II" ["Minority Report," Oct. 7]. In *Which Side Were You On?* historian Maurice Isserman takes a different view. He reports that James Ford, African-American C.P. leader and twice vice-presidential candidate, wrote in the *Communist* (the official party publication) that demands for equal voting rights, elimination of the poll tax and the end of discrimination in the armed forces and elsewhere should not be abandoned for the duration and "it would be equally wrong to press these demands without regard to the main task of the destruction of Hitler, without which no serious fight for Negro rights is possible." Mark Naison reports in *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* that World War II was when the C.P. made its greatest gains, an unlikely result if the party had abandoned its struggle for the rights of African-Americans. *Harvey Isaak*

MINEFIELDS OF SALVADOR

Chestnut Hill, Mass.
In "Watching Rights" [Oct. 14] Aryeh Neier says "most of the mines [in El Salvador] have been planted by the F.M.L.N. guerrillas." Renaldo Blanco of the executive committee of the Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador says the Salvadoran Army does not allow the independent investigation of mining sites. Upon what, then, does Neier base his charge?

Evidence supplied by the Salvadoran Army of F.M.L.N. involvement in the mining of civilian areas is highly suspect. Support for such allegations by the State Department and U.S.A.I.D. lends little credence. As Neier himself says, these agencies have a direct interest in blaming the F.M.L.N. for the minings.

No one denies that the F.M.L.N. has used land mines. In fact, they are a major problem for the Salvadoran Army. Blanco reports numerous instances of army units forcing civilians to cross F.M.L.N. minefields that they refuse to cross themselves. Such viciousness produces the civilian casualties needed to discredit the F.M.L.N. and spares Salvadoran soldiers a great risk. Blanco relied upon multiple witnesses for his assertions. What sources does Neier use? *Adam Shyevitch*

CUBA'S AID

Charlotte, Vt.
Aryeh Neier mentions that U.S.A.I.D. funds a program to supply land mine victims in El Salvador with prostheses. In September 1989 I talked with a handful of wounded F.M.L.N. guerrillas in sanctuary at the Cathedral of San Salvador who had been refused medical aid by the Salvadoran regime. Seventeen months later in the Miramar section of Havana I met some of the same people, now part of a settlement of about 300 Salvadorans allowed safe conduct to Cuba for medical treatment. With training by Cuban doctors they had set up their own prosthetics facility and were producing artificial legs. Arms and hands are more difficult, but they hoped to be supplying them soon. *Ed Everts*

NEIER REPLIES

New York City
For the past six and a half years, Americas Watch has maintained its own office and staff in El Salvador to investigate abuses of human rights on a day-in, day-out basis. Land mines have been a particular concern. In December 1986 Americas Watch published a 117-page report, "Land Mines in El Salvador and Nicaragua: The Civilian Victims," which discusses cases that we investigated ourselves. The report concludes, "The circumstances of their placement, the testimony Americas Watch has gathered, the findings of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese and its human rights office, Tutela Legal, and the findings of independent journalists, all persuade us that, in the main, civilian casualties result from mines placed by the FMLN guerrillas." Several subsequent Americas Watch reports reflect further investigations of land mines, as do the reports of Tutela Legal. Those investigations confirm the conclusions of the 1986 report. Although there have been a variety of obstacles to human rights fact-finding—including army obstruction—it has been possible for groups such as Tutela Legal and Americas Watch to gather information that I believe presents a reliable picture of the human rights situation in El Salvador. *Aryeh Neier*

CURRICULUM VITA

Northridge, Calif.
Rare is that consciousness that what I am reading is opening my mind and changing my thinking. I must thank 16-year-old homeschooled writer and violinist Vita Wallace for that experience ["Give Children the Vote," Oct. 14]. *Nicholas V. Seidita*

MODEST PROPOSALS

San Anselmo, Calif.
If I made the rules, Vita Wallace would have a vote! No child, that. As for Victor Navasky's "A People's Frank," [Oct. 14], former Senator John Sherman Cooper (of no particular fame except as one of the several sleeping members of the Warren Commission) once told me when I suggested a reverse frank, "Those are the kinds of ideas that bankrupt democracies." *Norman Gover*

REACH OUT & FRANK SOMEONE

New York City
Yup, the idea of a people's frank is a great one. How about a two-minute telephone call, not more than five calls a month or fifty per year? Since it is so much easier to call than write, it would encourage citizen participation in the political process. *I. Philip Sipser*

CORN, CHRISTIANS AND CONGRESS

Laurel, Md.
Speaking as a Bible-believing orthodox Christian, I say David Corn is absolutely correct when he says the spiritual beliefs of a public official can tell us a lot about that person and thus should not always be off-limits ["Letters," Oct. 28]. But I would go further. What authority a person is under is the most important question that can be asked of *anyone*—which is why the constitutional prohibition of a religious test for federal officeholders is a most egregious mistake. I mean, just look at our Congress. *John Lofton*

CORRECTION

In Michael Massing's "Noriega in Miami" [Dec. 2], Robert Merkle's name was misspelled.

AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER

We mistakenly reported the "defeat" of pro-choice Initiative 120 in Washington State ["Electoral Collage," Nov. 25]. While we regret the error, we do not regret that on Nov. 20 the initiative won by 4,314 votes, most of them absentee. There will be a mandatory recount.

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EDITORIALS.

Hello, Ghali

If the United Nations represents the world, then the Secretary General is the world's first citizen. Such a being may be hard to imagine after the performance of the cautious Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and, before him, the lackluster Kurt Waldheim. And the announcement last week by the Security Council that it had settled on Boutros Ghali, Egypt's Foreign Minister, as de Cuéllar's successor disappointed those U.N.-watchers who had hoped that a new internationalist man (or woman) might somehow be set on the world's stage at this post-cold war juncture. Broadly speaking, Ghali was chosen because he is a Southerner, and France and China had apparently promised to veto a Northerner. He is, cartographically speaking, from Africa, and there was strong sentiment among the nonaligned countries that it was Africa's turn to hold the portfolio. The United States evidently decided that this was as far "south" as it could go.

For all the talk about the revival of the United Nations in the past year, it should be clear that the only thing that has revived, so far, is the United States' interest in dominating the world body. As former Canadian ambassador to the U.N. Stephen Lewis told journalist Jim Wurst in a candid interview in the Summer 1991 issue of *World Policy Journal*, "When the United States wants something, sets its sights on getting it, and unleashes the full force of its remarkable range of influence, veiled coercion, promises, and expectations, it can

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get what it wants. And that's what happened in the Gulf War."

Few episodes illustrate this more clearly than the remarkable interchange between de Cuéllar and Saddam Hussein that took place in Baghdad two days before the January 15 deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait:

> *Pérez de Cuéllar*: Unfortunately, the history of the United Nations indicates that some Security Council resolutions have not been implemented. I know very well how you feel about this. However, as a friend of your country, I must say that bad examples should not be followed. . . .
>
> *Saddam Hussein*: These are American resolutions. This is an American age. What the U.S. wants at present is the thing that is passed, and not what the Security Council wants.
>
> *Pérez de Cuéllar*: I agree with you as much as the matter involves me. . . .

This transcript was leaked by Iraq and printed in *The Independent* on February 14. A spokeswoman for de Cuéllar told the paper that his office had "no problems with its substance."

Will Ghali distinguish himself from his predecessor? His main field of expertise is Africa, where he has helped mediate conflicts in western Sahara and Liberia on behalf of the Organization of African Unity. He also accompanied Anwar el-Sadat to Camp David. He is a supporter of the privatization wing of Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party, which apparently does not discomfit the Socialist International, of which he is deputy secretary. At 68 and in ill health, he is expected to serve only one term. Perhaps he will feel liberated from careerism, having achieved his goal. But his credentials do not raise our hopes.

Nevertheless, the U.N. may yet revive. Structured and functioning according to the dictates of power in a hierarchical state order, it nevertheless enshrines in its charter and in such documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the hopes of all humanity. The Secretary General has broad discretionary powers, including the ability to bring any matter of his concern to an official Security Council hearing. And there is a growing movement for institutional reform that cannot be indefinitely deferred. New problems that transcend national boundaries, like the environment and AIDS, are pulling the U.N. toward change. More calls are being heard for the Secretary General to take the lead in preventive diplomacy that would go beyond deploying peacekeeping forces after wars break out. What's needed is a push—like the one of the 1970s but involving the greatly expanded network of nongovernmental organizations and human rights monitors—for a new international order. And not the one Bush has in mind.

War and Amnesia

Tokyo

On the evening of Sunday, December 8, American survivors of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor will be holding a fiftieth anniversary banquet at the Japanese-owned Sheraton Waikiki Hotel in Honolulu. Four thousand miles away, Foreign Ministry officials here in Tokyo will be sticking to their business-as-usual position of acknowledging but not quite apologizing for their nation's role in World War II.

The Japanese government is still uncomfortable about confronting the nation's militarist past. There have been no grand *mea culpa*s such as German politicians have uttered. And although a few officials occasionally speak of the need for historical reflection, too often the result of any such reflection is the striking from schoolbooks of some Japanese act of aggression or war crime. One example of this was the attempt by the Ministry of Education to change references in textbooks to Japan's 1931 "invasion" of China to its "advance."

Foreign Ministry deputy press secretary Sadaaki Numada's comments are typical: "In the context of our relationship with the U.S., what is noteworthy is that although Japan and the U.S.A. fought fifty years ago, we have been able to build a viable and important relationship. We should be looking forward." For him and his kind the Pearl Harbor ceremonies represent "the anniversary of the United States breaking out of its shell of isolation and becoming involved in the Asian-Pacific region."

However, a lawsuit to be filed December 6 in Tokyo's District Court on behalf of three Korean women who claim to have been *jugunianfu* ("comfort girls") threatens to upset the pattern of bureaucratic evasions and to force Japan to confront its wartime record—not only vis-à-vis the United States but also with regard to its Asian neighbors.

In 1940, one of the three, Kim Pek Sun, was a 16-year-old girl coming of age in Seoul, then the capital of Japanese-occupied Korea. She claims that she and her sister were abducted to serve as comfort girls for Japanese soldiers. "My father and sister and I were called up by the Japanese Army. My father was begging them not to take us. They beat him savagely. And they took us away." The comfort girl battalion was a perverse attempt by Japanese Army authorities to restore discipline as their troops invaded China. The military brass hoped that if the soldiers' sexual needs were satisfied by battalions of camp followers they would stop raping Chinese women. According to the Japanese Bar Association's International Relations Committee, a liberal think tank, approximately 170,000 to 200,000 Korean women were forced or lured into becoming comfort girls. Each woman was supposed to "entertain" twenty-nine Japanese soldiers. The actual ratio was closer to one woman per 100 soldiers.

The Japanese government's steadfast position has been that any claims for war reparations or damages by Korean citizens were resolved by the 1965 treaty normalizing diplomatic relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan, a treaty in which the word "reparations" never appears. The Japanese government has also insisted that "there is insufficient material to substantiate the alleged case."

Attorney Takagi Kenichi, who is handling one of the former comfort girls' cases, hopes that the emergence of the three, in addition to new documentation of the practice found in the Diet library, will force a ruling against the government. Because of Korea's puritanical sexual mores, former comfort girls previously have been too ashamed to seek financial damages or a statement of contrition. Kim Pek Sun, whose husband and children have died, feels she has nothing to lose. "Even though I'm very ashamed, I want them to apologize."

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The lawsuit seeks a formal apology from the Japanese government and damages totaling Y20 million (about $153,000) for each of the women.

The comfort girls' case has been largely ignored by the Japanese and Western press, lost in all the hype about the fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Too bad; the stories of these three Korean women should have served as an occasion for reflection on the disastrous consequences of Japanese militarism. History cannot be silenced, so long as its witnesses still live. KARL TARO GREENFELD

Karl Taro Greenfeld is a writer based in Tokyo.

Free at Last

With the freeing of Terry Waite and Thomas Sutherland on November 18 and the promised release of the three other American hostages, the long, convoluted hostage drama appears to be winding up. The primary reason of the pro-Iranian groups for holding them had actually ended with the termination of the Iran-Iraq war. Whatever the initial motives of the hostage-takers in Lebanon may have been—beginning with the abduction in 1984 of William Buckley, the C.I.A. station chief in Beirut—they became entangled with the progress of the 1980-88 conflict between Baghdad and Teheran.

As Iran began to prevail over Iraq in the mid-1980s, inducing increased Western involvement on the Iraqi side, the likelihood increased that the Reagan Administration would hit strategic Iranian targets, particularly Kharg Island, from which 90 percent of Iran's oil is exported. The pro-Iranian groups focused on tactics to avert this. One of them was to threaten to kill Western hostages if Washington intervened directly against Iran.

Adding credibility to this threat was the precedent set by Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi. After the 1986 air raids on Tripoli by U.S. F-111s based in Britain, Qaddafi reportedly "bought" three Western hostages—two British teachers and an American journalist, Peter Kilburn—for $1 million and had them assassinated.

It was against this background that Waite, special envoy of the Archbishop of Canterbury, was kidnapped by the Islamic Jihad in January 1987. His captors believed that Waite was being used as a decoy to help locate the American hostages. At the time there were reports that when Waite was searched, his captors found a directional bug that was supposedly being monitored by a U.S. warship in the eastern Mediterranean. Among others, Gen. Mustafa Tlas, Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army, made this charge. Waite was also linked to Oliver North, with whom he had met. Following his release, North and Richard Secord admitted that they had been "using" Waite, though they denied the bugging charge.

Apparently the addition of Waite to the ranks of the Western hostages had a sobering impact on Washington policymakers. At any rate, when tensions rose in the Persian Gulf in the summer of 1987 and the U.S. naval presence was increased to restore U.S. credibility with its Arab clients—who had been shaken by revelations of arms sales to the Iranians—the Pentagon refrained from attacking Kharg Island or such mainland targets as Iran's Silkworm missiles.

After the Iran-Iraq cease-fire in August 1988, the chief reason for holding the hostages was eliminated. It was then that the more radical members of the hostage-taking groups revived the linkage between their captives and the 400-plus Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel and the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army. Israel countered by demanding an accounting of the whereabouts of its missing servicemen.

In July 1989 the pragmatic Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected President of Iran and set out to repair the war-shattered Iranian economy. He knew that he must mend fences with the West by getting the hostages released. After several months' effort he was able to establish control over the pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon, and if all had gone according to plan, the hostages would have been home by last Christmas. But the gulf crisis intervened, and Rafsanjani's plans were derailed.

Once the Gulf War ended this past March, the stage was set for a final resolution of the problem. On November 20, Sheik Abbas Musawi, secretary general of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah, severed the linkage between the Western hostages and the Arab prisoners held by the Israelis. Now as the pro-Iranian groups seem set to release the remaining Western hostages no matter what the Israelis do or don't do, this particular chapter seems at an end. DILIP HIRO

Dilip Hiro is author, most recently, of a history of the Iran-Iraq war.

★

GRAY AREA

The White House is in disarray.
The megaklutz, C. Boyden Gray,
Can't seem to find a way to say
"We mean to keep the blacks at bay"
Without igniting quite a fray.
With such a message to convey,
A messenger can go astray.
He has to find a subtle way
To send it out—not overplay,
And sound just like the K.K.K.
The subtlety of all this may
Just be too much for Boyden Gray.

In which case, they'll have to find
somebody else to do it.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

New Orleans

Opinion-poll findings can be fascinating or absurd or misleading, but one of the discoveries made by the *Times-Picayune* about David Duke really made me sit up. The newspaper asked people after the vote whether they believed that the former storm trooper and Grand Wizard had "changed." And 14 percent of Duke's voters responded No. Allowing for low mentality and the degeneration of the white gene pool under the influence of a decade of Reagan/Bush, that still suggests an amazing number of eligible voters who chose Duke because of, or in spite of, his avowal of the most pornographic element in National Socialism.

Probing into this, as I did in various bars and dives frequented by Duke supporters, I found that the "coding" of the Duke message was less subtle and more gross than I had been led to expect. Any fool can run by making innuendoes about the underclass—one such fool is now our President, after all—but most of them count the votes and make deniable noises and leave it at that. The Duke forces find the white underclass where it is already most vulnerable—in competition, or imagined competition, with the black underclass for jobs and entitlements—and go further. They want conclusions drawn, of which the decision to vote Republican is the least important. They want supporters to ask, Who is behind integration and race mixing? Who benefits from it? And they want them to answer, and to believe, that it is the Jews.

If you take all Duke's open and covert statements over his long career, it is clear that the black question basically bores him. Why stop at saying what Republicans can imply and Democrats can be shamefaced in not denying? The real energy of his theory and practice is provided by anti-Semitism. A hard evening's drinking with one young supporter materialized my suspicion. After the usual stuff about black muggers and dope dealers and fast breeders, he became more animated: "The niggers do all the crime, so you got to get theft insurance. And you can only buy theft insurance from the Jews." He looked triumphant, as if a neat answer to a baffling mystery had been discovered by an Aryan physicist. It was the same with this boy's peer group. Amazingly lacking in any sign of formal education, they were capable of being positively scholarly on the subject of the Holocaust, the Crucifixion, Wall Street's support for Bolshevism and the Jewish love for the mongrelization of the races. (I, who count only the last three of these as myths, often had to do some very fast talking.) Somebody, in other words, has been putting in some steady work down here.

In a recent television debate with the Metzgers *père et fils*, who lead the White Aryan Resistance, I found the same. They take no time dismissing all nonwhites and Third Worlders as "mud people" and a species without a soul. What gets them going is the stuff about Jewish doctors running the abortion business for genocidal purposes; Jewish involvement with disease; Jewish control over the media. Like Duke, they can't seem to decide whether the Final Solution was attempted and was a good thing, or wasn't attempted and is a propaganda fable; but it is at any rate their favorite subject. It allows for conspiracy, which the libel on blacks does not.

In much the same way, Jean-Marie Le Pen had a nice racket in France, denouncing Arabs and Africans, until he blurted out his fouler thoughts on the Holocaust. At once, he was in all kinds of trouble with people who might otherwise have found him a bit rough but no more than a nuisance-value populist. So why did he do it? Because he couldn't *not* do it, and because the whole movement of French "purity" is an attempt to reverse the Dreyfus decision.

I had this larger point put to me, but in a more guarded way, by a black New Orleans attorney with a fine civil rights record. Thank God that Duke was a Nazi as well as a Klansman, the gist of his argument went; otherwise black voters would have had to face him more or less unaided (as they did in neighboring Mississippi, against the ultimately victorious Fordice campaign). I couldn't disagree with the analysis, and I'd noticed that Duke supporters cited Fordice as an example of what might happen when the Jewish media were looking the other way, but I thought there was something wanting in the expression of the analysis. What my new friend was saying, in effect, was, It's O.K. to slander us, but lay off the Jews if you want to get elected.

Does the campaign to isolate Duke not give impetus to rebuilding a black-Jewish alliance?

Might there not be a corollary just as true but more dynamic? Does the successful campaign to isolate Duke not give an impetus to the rebuilding of a black-Jewish alliance? The exemplary work of the Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism (Suite 915, 234 Loyola Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70112) indicates that it does. In Louisiana there were no black leaders suggesting that Jews are behind the AIDS virus, or that Jews run the redlining banks, or any of that Steve Cokely/Louis Farrakhan stuff. Nor were Jews saying that Duke was on to something when it came to "quotas." Confronted with the enemy in plain view, and with Jew-baiting as the father of lies, sectarianism was dispelled. Call me a sentimental old baggage if you will, but faced with Duke's socialism of fools, certain old socialist precepts seemed to me very much in order.

Gurgling horribly at a conference of Holocaust revisionists in 1986, Duke signaled his intention on tape, saying: "I hate to be Machiavellian, but I would suggest that you don't really talk much about National Socialism. You need to leave your options open." Reminded that Hitler started with seven men, he exclaimed: "Right! And don't you think it can happen right now, if we put the right package together?"

"Options" and "package" are the language of everyday marketing and spin control and political correctness. They would be more easily exposed, and in more places, if authentic forces talked real politics and made real alliances.

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WATCHING RIGHTS.

ARYEH NEIER

Ten years ago, in December 1981, the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion murdered more than a thousand civilian noncombatants in a group of hamlets in the department of Morazán in El Salvador. That episode, known as the El Mozote massacre—named for one of the hamlets that was wiped out—was the largest-scale slaughter in the war that has been under way since 1979. At a moment when the end of that war may be in sight, and when the chairman of a special Congressional panel has accused the Salvadoran high command of conspiring in the November 1989 murder of the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter by troops from that same Atlacatl Battalion, it is important to commemorate the anniversary of El Mozote. If the Salvadoran high command was involved in the murder of the Jesuits, as Representative Joe Moakley has charged, the State Department officials who a decade ago denied that a massacre had taken place at El Mozote are among those who should be held responsible.

The military operation that initiated the massacre began on December 8, 1981, and most of the killing occurred over a three-day period starting December 11. As the events have been reconstructed in a recent report by Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador, the Atlacatl troops assembled their victims and mowed them down. Most of the 794 people whose identities Tutela Legal has been able to determine were children.

On January 27, 1982, front-page stories about the massacre appeared in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Ray Bonner of the *Times* and Alma Guillermoprieto of the *Post* had traveled into guerrilla-held territory to view the carnage. On the day after their stories appeared, President Reagan certified that the human rights conditions for continued U.S. aid to the Salvadoran military had been met. In the ten days that followed, hearings to review those certifications were held before committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The principal witness for the Administration was Thomas Enders, then the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. He told the members of Congress that there was "no evidence" that a massacre had taken place and suggested that the numbers cited by the press could not be credible because the population of El Mozote was "probably not more than 300."

Enders's statement was based on an "investigation" by the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador. Yet because the hamlets swept up in the massacre were in guerrilla-held territory, the embassy officials never visited the area. The closest they came was by helicopter, flying at a height from which they might have seen bodies but could not have determined how the victims died. On the ground the officials stopped several miles from the scene and interviewed no survivors. Enders's claim that El Mozote's population did not exceed 300 was not only wrong (Tutela Legal has named 393 victims from that hamlet) but it obfuscated the fact that the killings took place in several hamlets. The factors that made the embassy's assessment worthless were not revealed to the members of Congress at the time, either by Enders or by his companion at the witness table, the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Elliott Abrams.

On February 10, 1982, *The Wall Street Journal* published an editorial denouncing Ray Bonner for his reporting on the massacre, charging that he had been "overly credulous" in accepting survivors' accounts. Later that year *The New York Times* removed Bonner from El Salvador and reassigned him to cover business from New York. He quit the *Times* as a regular reporter not long thereafter.

In alleging that years later the Salvadoran high command planned another great crime by Atlacatl troops—the murder of the Jesuits—Representative Moakley said that his information indicates that "the initiative for the murders" came from Gen. Juan Rafael Bustillo, then head of the Salvadoran Air Force, while "the reactions of the others [present at the meeting of the high command] ranged from support to reluctant acceptance to silence." To those who have followed El Salvador closely, the implication of Bustillo is unlikely to come as a surprise.

In the mid-1980s Bustillo's planes carried out the aerial bombardment campaign that forced much of the peasant population that remained in guerrilla-controlled areas to flee their homes. Although President José Napoleón Duarte issued "rules of engagement" for the Salvadoran Air Force in September 1984 that would have ended the bombing of civilians, Bustillo paid no heed. That year my colleague Juan Méndez of Americas Watch and I got a sense of Bustillo's role when we met with another member of the Salvadoran high command, Vice Minister of Defense Col. Reynaldo Lopez Nuila, to complain about an abduction from a displaced persons camp. To our surprise, Lopez Nuila admitted that the abduction had been carried out by the Air Force, which was refusing to comply with a recent directive, this time from the high command, intended to curb "disappearances." It was not until more than two years later, when the plane carrying Eugene Hasenfus was shot down in Nicaragua after taking off from an air force base in El Salvador controlled by Bustillo, that I began to understand how Bustillo could exercise such independent authority. President Duarte claimed he had never been informed of the arrangement between his air force commander and the C.I.A. to base the planes supplying the *contras* in El Salvador. Bustillo apparently came to believe that he could get away with anything.

If a peace settlement does materialize in El Salvador, there will be many people eager to erase the memory of the massacres, the bombings and the other terrible events of the war. Almost certainly, a new amnesty law will be instituted, freeing the two officers convicted for the murder of the Jesuits. It is fortunate for El Salvador that it has a Tutela Legal to honor the memory of the dead by painstakingly reconstructing the events in Morazán a decade ago and by publishing the names not only of those victims who could be identified but also the names of the military officers who directed the slaughter. Although the latter cannot be prosecuted because of a previous amnesty law, enacted in 1987, their crimes and their guilt should not be forgotten.

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ARTICLES.

NATIONAL HEALTH CARE

Seizing the Historic Moment

ANDREW KOPKIND

The time has come to add health care to the structure of public prosperity in America. It is a time that recalls other great public points of departure: government recognition of labor union rights, the passage of the Social Security Act, civil rights legislation in the mid-1960s. But decades after every other rich capitalist country (except South Africa) and every socialist state present or past has instituted a national health system, the United States is in a corrosive crisis of care, cost and comprehensiveness. Americans' life and liberty are protected, up to a point. The pursuit of happiness, promised to all citizens two centuries ago, has been suspended.

Certainly no one is happy with the way health care is handled now. Across the political and ideological spectrum, almost everyone sees the need for some action, if only to blunt the rising anger of the victims of the crisis. There are literally scores of plans and proposed pieces of legislation for reforming or revamping health care, from the single-payer, federally funded program pushed by some progressives to the employer-determined cost-saving schemes favored by radical free-marketeers. But no consensus is forming around any idea, and the politics of change is so sticky that the historic moment may well be lost.

If the moment is one of great possibility, it is also one of looming peril. For it is a character of the crisis that the question of health care has moved from policy debate to social struggle. Issues of class, equality and justice have come to the fore, just as they did in the historic battles over collective bargaining, old-age pensions and civil rights. To borrow one more time a baleful formulation, the problem is one of ideology, not competence. At this stage, there may be more organized strength opposing rather than supporting real change. And although there is ample evidence from polls and, recently, from actual elections that large majorities favor a comprehensive national health system, "people power" may prove no match for the superfunded lobbies and corporate interests on the other side.

The immediate danger is not only that reform will be utterly defeated (which is nonetheless likely) but that incremental corrections will be allowed specifically to abort the process of *perestroika* that will produce a health security system. It has happened before, on the national as well as local level. Wilbur Cohen, Lyndon Johnson's point man on the 1965 Medicare bill, recalled in a memoir that he believed its Medicaid provisions—which effectively gave a new welfare program to the poor—would stop, rather than abet, the slide toward "socialized medicine" that many powerful politicians and industry interests feared. As it turned out, *something* stopped further progress, so Medicaid must have worked.

Three and a half years ago, in a mad rush to make Michael Dukakis President, the Massachusetts state legislature passed a guaranteed-access health insurance act, misleadingly hyped as a state health care system. The model for the "pay or play" bills now favored by some Democratic leaders in Congress, the Massachusetts plan made certain employers with large or medium-sized businesses responsible for providing health insurance for their workers. Those employers who would not "play" were obliged to "pay" into a state pool that provided for those not covered. The act did nothing to improve the quality of care for those already covered. Indeed, it simply incorporated all the wastefulness, discrimination, arbitrariness and market-driven biases of the prevailing system. Worse, perhaps, it did nothing to cap rising costs and it actually increased state aid to hospitals, more or less as a bribe for their approval. And just when the plan was supposed to get under way, the miraculous Massachusetts economy imploded and Dukakis's "leveraged liberalism" went bankrupt along with leveraged everything else. Unsurprisingly, the insurance system never went into effect.

Health care no longer involves only the needs of the poor.

While the Massachusetts plan (if it had survived the local recession) could have helped many thousands of residents to gain entrance to the health system and thus would have served a significant social purpose, it did have a deleterious social effect, which was to divide and debilitate the considerable constituency for substantial health care reform in the state. The poor felt the crisis earlier and more sharply than other health care consumers, and thus they have energized, in Massachusetts as elsewhere, the fight for improvements in the system. But by treating the problem as one of group welfare, not social right, the managers and politicians were able to buy off the movement.

What makes this moment more pregnant with possibilities than other times in the history of the struggle for health care is that it no longer involves only the needs of the poor. As elections from Bernie Sanders's notable victory for Vermont's only Congressional seat in 1990 to Pennsylvania Senator Harris Wofford's recent come-from-behind victory over former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh have shown, health care is a winning issue in middle-class constituencies. The well-documented squeeze of moderate-income families—which began at the end of the Vietnam era, continued during the stagflation 1970s and has accelerated in the Reagan-Bush years—has taken its toll in the area of health as it has in most other aspects of economic life. The charts show that medical costs have gone through the stratosphere—8.3 percent annually

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for the past nineteen years, far ahead of the inflation rate—but just as important is the fact that average family income has actually *declined* since 1972, while debt-financed consumption of all manner of goods and services, from vacations to education, has increased. Health care is both more expensive and less affordable.

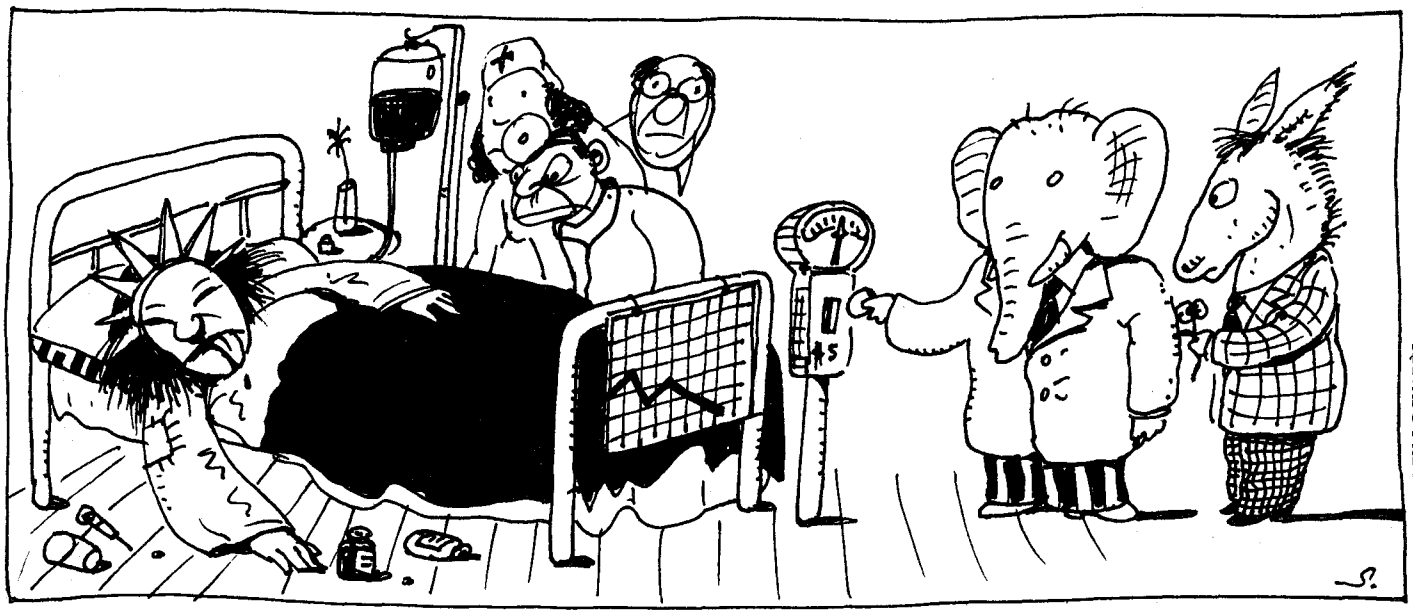
The sad stories are well known to every family in America. Victims of the wretched health care system are as prevalent as victims of wretched diseases. Most insurance coverage is inadequate, co-payments are burdensome and bargaining with management for insurance extensions (or against givebacks) is demoralizing to labor. The whole process is thus antiproductive and anticompetitive and gets reflected in stagnant salaries and lowered benefits. Even holders of the best policies play insurance roulette when they send in claims for catastrophic illnesses, long-term care or offbeat therapies. Unlike the Social Security system, which at least offers minimum support to everyone regardless of the state of the local or national economy, both private health insurance and Medicare/Medicaid are dependent on the vagaries of casino capitalism and political whim. Just last month, the government cut back billions of dollars in Medicare payments to providers. In Michigan, 80,000 unemployed people were dropped from welfare rolls. And in countless workplaces, laid-off workers have lost health insurance for themselves and their families.

Anyone dropping into America in the early 1990s could see what awesome political benefits await the first party that makes health care its number-one issue. But neither the Republicans nor the Democrats have seized what must be the opportunity of a lifetime. The Republicans, to be sure, have a serious ideological impairment as they view the crisis. Buffeted by the extraordinary pressures raised by Wofford's election and the subsequent media excitement, Budget Director Richard Darman is offering a do-nothing plan that would cap malpractice awards, extend some welfare programs and ask employers to cover more workers. The Bush Administration seems to like the Oregon Plan, which is obsessed with rising costs and depresses care to save money. Medical treatments and conditions are scaled, a person's standing in the economic system determines what diseases and what therapies are allowed, and all of it relies on elusive good times. In bad times one better have a cheap disease and a cut-rate doctor.

The Democratic leadership seems wary of taking a stand. Many particular leaders call for reform and a "new health care system," but most "prefer principles to plans," as one political adviser put it. If any one program seems popular among the top leaders it is a version of "pay or play," which was such a disaster in Massachusetts. Not only is it impractical but it's bad politics as well [see Thomas Bodenheimer, page 772]. For it requires a heavy tax on the middle class in order to pay for more welfare for the poor, provides a safety net for the hated insurance industry and adds no cost-capping benefits to flavor the stew. "If the Democrats have the stupidity to send 'pay or play' to Bush, he could veto it and actually gain points in an election year," the adviser warned.

Many Democrats in the middle and lower ranks of Congress are offering much better plans. Presidential candidate Bob Kerrey, a Senator from Nebraska, is the first of "The Six" running so far to propose an actual reform package rather than a rhetorical flourish. He calls his idea "Health USA." It's a bit of a mishmash of public and private elements, but it has many of the features of a real national health system. Bernie Sanders, not a Democrat but allied with his few progressive colleagues, is backing a Canadian-style scheme that would also empower states to act on their own in advance of a federal system—just as Social Security began on the state level. Illinois Congressman Marty Russo's bill is national from the start; it would establish a single-payer system and eliminate private insurance, also on the Canadian model. Russo meets regularly with a posse of co-sponsors to plot strategy, but everyone knows that nothing will happen with his or any other bill unless the leadership gives the go-ahead.

The nod is not likely to come soon. House Speaker Tom Foley horrified a group of Representatives and their staff members recently by recounting with great enthusiasm a conversation he'd had with some Seattle doctors who said there was no big crisis in health that couldn't be cured by the lower classes adopting the behavior of their betters—eschewing fast



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food, not smoking, that sort of thing. "Talking to him is like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall," one of the aides joked grimly. Senate majority leader George Mitchell has told colleagues that he gets booed up in Maine every time he tells his constituents they can't have a health plan like Canada's, which is well known because of its proximity. And why can't they have it? Because it isn't "possible" in America, Mitchell insists.

The Democrats seem deeply depressed. Perhaps mirroring the lowered economic expectations and political disappointments of most Americans, the politicians have abandoned almost everything they once stood for, or that once interested them. Ted Kennedy, who had a reasonably good health care bill in the late 1970s (co-written with former California Representative James Corman), has "sort of given up," a labor union health care advocate reported. "He says he's been banged up so much on this that he just doesn't want to stick his neck out there again. He's a sad case." Few Democrats think any real reform is possible while a Republican is in the White House. But even if a Democrat wins, the support is not really solid. A party heavyweight like Lloyd Bentsen is offering little more than the Republicans, and he can be expected to do his best to keep his corporate sponsors happy.

Earlier great leaps toward social democracy were spurred by mass movements. Decades of titanic labor struggle produced the 1935 Wagner Act. The sit-ins, marches, voting drives—and violent clashes—of the civil rights movement, beginning in the mid-1950s, left Lyndon Johnson and Congress virtually no choice but to pass the public accommodations and voting rights acts ten years later.

For health care, the struggle is not so sharp or as broadly based, perhaps because it involves middle-class attitudes as well as lower-class demands. A coalition of activist labor unions, called the Jobs With Justice Health Care Campaign, has mounted a few mobilizations behind the Russo bill, but organized labor is hardly united on the issue. The more conservative (read: "white," "male" and "higher-salaried") unions are shy of supporting any plan that might challenge their corporate protectors and new allies. Some big unions run their own health plans, which might have to be abandoned in a single-payer system, and many have enormous pension funds that invest heavily in the pharmaceutical, insurance and hospital industries, all of which would probably be reined in by a really good national system.

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Over the past twenty years hundreds of health-advocacy organizations have been formed by groups as diverse as medical students, women with breast cancer and site-specific toxic-waste victims. Protracted campaigns with frequent direct-action attacks have been mounted by ACT UP on AIDS policy; by the handicapped for laws regulating access to public facilities; and by pro-choice activists for reproductive rights. National health reform is relevant to all those causes (indeed, the costs and scope of the AIDS epidemic have been an important spur to action) but it has not been easy to get everyone focused on a common purpose. ACT UP tried to crank up a coalition to organize a health policy demonstration in Washington next spring, but spirits are low and so far it's a no-go. A decade of official stonewalling and indefinite postponement of virtually every item on America's social agenda has taken its toll on the morale of all activists. A declining number of motivated and committed organizers scream their lungs out, but no one listens. There is a dead hand on the stick of social policy.

It is difficult to see how Russo's bill or anything comparable can be enacted without much more organized support at the grass roots than now exists. If Kerrey or another Democratic candidate truly put such a plan at the forefront of his campaign, and if he were elected, he might be able to repeat Franklin Roosevelt's triumph with Social Security. But it's no easy walk to health security. The business elites, many of which deeply desire some plan that would help them cut their costs and their obligations in providing health care, are unanimously against any system that would abolish "private" medicine.

"Gatekeeper" media, such as *The New York Times* and public television, are equally unhappy with any system that seems based on collective security. There is no interest in democratizing social services and no faith in the political structure to administer them. The *Times* rejected proposals for a single-payer system like Canada's because, it argued, without a responsive parliament, an American version would run out of control. Others have stated that America's "nonhomogeneous," i.e. black and Hispanic, population would make national health too expensive. Not for nothing have white governments in Washington and Pretoria consistently opposed the extension of health rights to all citizens.

Naturally, the "experts" in right-wing think tanks and academic departments are feeding the media with horror stories from "socialized" systems in Canada, Britain, Poland and other nightmare countries. Tales of endless lines for Pap smears and long waits for elective heart surgery are taking their place alongside Ronald Reagan's fables of welfare queens in Cadillacs and polluting trees as conservative cautionary tales for the nineties. Much of the gaff is truly disinformation, and the rest can easily be argued as contextual—based on social conditions that do not translate from Warsaw to Washington, for instance—but the gatekeepers eat it up.

But it still seems more possible to overcome stonewalling than to counter piecemealing. The crisis managers are sure to pick the least effective, most expensive and most class-divisive health care system. Marginal, incremental reforms will be touted as the most practical way to deliver better care to those most critically in need. But the real objective will be to

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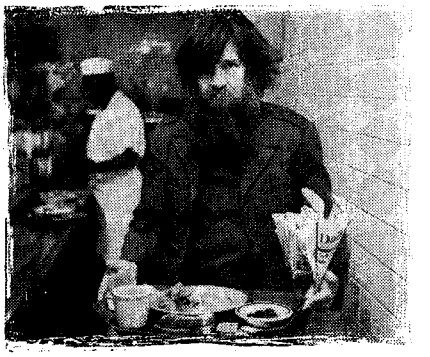

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perpetuate the privileges of those who already have the power. As one of the Washington health policy denizens said, "Marginalism in theory is perpetualism in practice." □

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

The Way to Real Health Security

THOMAS BODENHEIMER

More than 37 million Americans are without any health insurance, and an additional 56 million have insurance so inadequate that a serious illness could throw them into bankruptcy. At the same time, U.S. health care costs are the highest in the world and are rising at nearly twice the general rate of inflation.

How do we solve the two-part health crisis, the crisis of access and the crisis of cost? At first glance, proposed solutions appear abundant. On May 15, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, with full media fanfare, published no fewer than thirteen proposals for insuring the uninsured. But on closer inspection, twelve of them are virtually identical. Our nation must choose between two proposals for solving the health care crisis. The contestants are the "private insurance reform package" and the "health security approach."

The private insurance reform package is a concoction of the health care industry: physicians, hospitals, commercial insurers, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, pharmaceutical companies, the medical supply industry—in short, the people who make money from the sickness of others. The health security approach, modeled on the Canadian system, is favored by the people; in a 1990 Harris poll, 66 percent favored such a plan. Let's take a look at these alternative solutions to the nation's health care chaos.

The private insurance reform package has two main components: a program for unemployed people with no insurance (Medicaid expansion) and a separate plan for the employed who are uninsured (employer-mandated health insurance).

Medicaid expansion. One-third of uninsured adults are either unemployed or have incomes below the poverty line. The easiest way to insure this group is to expand Medicaid, the federal-state program that covers 40 percent of the poor. This approach is supported by the American Medical Association and the private insurance industry. For insurers, removing the poor (who cannot afford insurance) from the private market relieves the industry of responsibility for a portion of those who lack insurance without encroaching on an area of possible insurance expansion.

The main weakness of this program is its high cost. Medicaid expansion would cost an estimated $14 billion in its first year, and Health Care Financing Administration chief Gail Wilensky has stated that no funds are available. Another problem with Medicaid expansion is that many states pay physicians' fees that are half or less those paid by Medicare or private insurers. My own group medical practice receives $14.60 for a Medicaid patient visit; we lose money each time such a patient walks in the door. More and more doctors are refusing to see Medicaid patients or are limiting the number of such patients.

Employer-mandated health insurance (E.M.H.I.). Two-thirds of the uninsured are employed or dependents of working people; most work in small companies that cannot afford to buy health insurance for their employees. E.M.H.I. is the American Medical Association's favored plan for covering uninsured working people. The hospital industry is also supportive. The Congressional Democratic leadership is calling for E.M.H.I., as is the National Leadership Coalition for Health Care Reform (which includes major unions and corporations such as the United Steelworkers, Chrysler, International Paper and Lockheed) and the Pepper Commission, chaired by Senator Jay Rockefeller. Hawaii, Massachusetts and Oregon have passed E.M.H.I. laws; several others have versions of E.M.H.I. on their legislative agendas.

For budget-squeezed politicians, E.M.H.I. looks like manna from heaven. Pass a law forcing all businesses either to purchase health insurance for their employees or to pay a tax to fund coverage for the uninsured—"pay or play," as it is known. Lo and behold, the majority of the uninsured are suddenly insured, at no cost to the government. Great idea? Well, let's take a closer look.

Most large employers already provide health insurance. So E.M.H.I. forces small companies to come up with much of the financing for the employed who lack coverage. Thus, companies with the smallest profit margins will be saddled with most of the burden. In Massachusetts E.M.H.I. is estimated to increase labor costs for small employers by 12 percent of the first $14,000 of every employee's wages. How will employers respond? According to the Partnership on Health Care and Employment, a national E.M.H.I. plan could force companies to lay off between 5.4 million and 8.6 million people. Blue Cross/Blue Shield vice president Donald Cohodes says, "Mandating health insurance coverage for employees of small employers may be tantamount to mandating employer bankruptcy."

E.M.H.I. would also be an administrative nightmare. According to Professor Alvin Schorr's 1990 *New England Journal of Medicine* study, companies with uninsured workers have a high-turnover work force. The average time on the job is between five and eleven months, with an average of seven and a half weeks unemployed between jobs. An employer would take a month or two to process health insurance papers for a newly hired employee, and the employee would spend another month or two making arrangements with a health maintenance organization or other health provider. By this time, many newly insured employees would be leaving the job, Schorr points out. After a few months of unemployment, the employee would find another job and begin the bureaucratic treadmill all over again.

Thomas Bodenheimer is a practicing physician in San Francisco and a member of Physicians for a National Health Program.

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A basic flaw of E.M.H.I. is the linkage of health insurance to employment. Millions of workers change jobs each year; employees offered coverage by one health maintenance organization (H.M.O.) may, upon changing jobs, be forced to sign up with a different H.M.O. and thus lose their family physician. Those with pre-existing illnesses may face major restrictions in new health insurance policies. Workers who are laid off or who leave jobs for health reasons may lose their employer-sponsored insurance at critical times in their lives. Spouses and children of insured workers may also lose their insurance. Divorces may leave children and spouses uninsured if coverage is based on one family member's job.

Of all the problems with the private insurance reform package, none are more damaging than its failure to control costs. The Bush Administration and health insurers claim to have a new solution to health cost inflation: managed care. In an attempt to contain costs, most managed care plans restrict patients' freedom to choose their physicians. Yet managed care has an undistinguished track record on cost control. While H.M.O.s, the main weapon in managed care's arsenal, can boast success in cutting hospital use, that success does not translate into long-term savings. Between 1961 and 1981, H.M.O. costs inflated as fast as overall health care costs. In the late 1980s, even with managed care accounting for at least three-quarters of all group insurance plans, premiums for group health insurance rose by 18 percent a year.

It is impossible to improve health care access without simultaneously containing costs. Look at Medicare: Its costs have skyrocketed, and the elderly now have to spend a greater proportion of their income on health care than they did before Medicare was created in 1965. Check out Medicaid: As costs climbed, state and federal governments cut the program. The proportion of the poor covered by Medicaid has dropped from 70 percent to 40 percent. Take private health insurance: As costs have climbed, so have premiums, forcing businesses to shift more health costs onto employees or stop insuring their employees altogether. The message should be clear: As costs go up, access to care goes down. The access crisis and the cost crisis must be solved together. The health security approach does just that.

Social Security collects payments from virtually everyone in society and provides benefits to everyone upon retirement. A health security system would copy this model: Just as we all have a Social Security card, so we would have a health security card, entitling us to care at any doctor's office, hospital or group practice we choose. The system would cover hospital and physician care; labwork, X-rays and other ancillary services; prescription drugs; mental health services; and long-term care.

Socialized medicine? No. Most hospitals would continue to be privately owned, and outpatient care would be delivered by the same pluralistic mix of private physicians, H.M.O.s, community clinics and local public health facilities we have now. The health security approach meshes public insurance and private medicine.

Patients would never see a hospital or a medical bill. Rather, the single health care trust fund set up in every state, under federal guidelines, would pay each hospital a lump-sum budget negotiated yearly with the hospital. Physicians would be prohibited from sending bills to patients and would be paid fees by the health care trust fund.

Where would the money come from? The funds would derive from the same places they come from now: employer and employee premiums for group health insurance and taxes that currently finance such programs as Medicare and Medicaid. The only change would be that money currently going to private insurance companies would be rerouted to the health care trust fund in each state. The money currently paid in out-of-pocket medical bills or cash at the time of receiving service would be converted to prepayment. That is, all funds would be paid to the health care trust fund either through premiums or earmarked health care taxes that are graduated by income so that wealthy people would pay higher rates than lower- and middle-income people. Remember, any new taxes or premiums would replace, rather than add to, current family health expenses. Most families would pay less rather than more for health care than they do under the current system.

How about the uncontrollable rise in health costs? Under the health security approach, cost control is simple. Evidence from other nations—Canada and Germany are two examples—demonstrates that when hospitals and doctors are reimbursed by a single payment mechanism, total health costs can be budgeted and runaway health care inflation can be stopped. If health care inflation is reduced from its present 8.3 percent a year to 6 percent, in the year 2000 we will spend hundreds of billions less on health care than under the proposed health insurance reform package, which lacks a serious cost-control program.

While the private insurance reform package would cost as much as $50 billion to $80 billion per year in new dollars, the health security approach would not cost the nation one

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extra cent. In 1991 the nation will spend about $700 billion on personal health care services. At least 25 percent of this sum, $175 billion, goes for administration—paper pushing by hundreds of insurance companies, more paper pushing by hospitals that have to bill hundreds of insurance companies, and yet more paper pushing by doctors billing those same hundreds of companies. The replacement, within each state, of these multiple insurers by one public insurance fund would save the nation an estimated $67 billion each year. That is enough money to insure all of the 37 million uninsured and to improve the coverage of the 56 million underinsured, with plenty to spare for transition costs to the new health security system. These administrative savings would be achieved by abolishing most private health insurance and by converting hospital and physician administrative expenses into the provision of more medical care.

Because so much money would be saved from cutting administrative waste, there would be no need to ration needed services or to force people into long waits for medical services. Some people argue that Canada, utilizing a similar system, requires people to wait for months for certain surgical procedures. But let's keep in mind that Canada spends about 9 percent of its gross national product on health care, while the United States spends more than 12 percent. With our well-financed health system, there would be no need for such waiting lists in the United States.

The nation's health care industry is at a historic crossroad. Do we join the rest of the civilized world and provide health services to everyone at a cost we all can afford, utilizing the well-recognized principle of universal public insurance? Or do we bumble along with a bureaucratically top-heavy mixture of inflationary programs marred by gaps and uncertainties in insurance coverage, punishing those with lower incomes and higher ages?

Extending current policies through the insurance reform package would perpetuate the effective division of society into two groups. To use insurance industry terminology, the first is the "preferred risk grouping," which consists of younger, healthier and more affluent people who pay for their own health insurance either directly or indirectly as a fringe benefit (which comes out of their paychecks). The second is the "unacceptable risk grouping," which comprises chronically ill or elderly people, whom private insurers do not want to cover, and low-income people, who cannot afford private insurance; health care for this group is either subsidized by taxpayers through Medicare and Medicaid or is paid for by increases in the premiums of privately insured people.

By separating society into those two groups, our health system gives those who are in the preferred risk category the impression that they are paying twice: once for their own health insurance and again through taxes or higher premiums for the "unacceptable" risk group. Moreover, the media have conveyed the impression that the unacceptable risks are mainly unemployed, homeless, minority people who may be alcoholics, drug abusers, mentally ill and/or infected with HIV. This group is seen as the enemy, soaking up much of the health care dollar. Such a perception undermines popular support for public funding of health care and obstructs the passage

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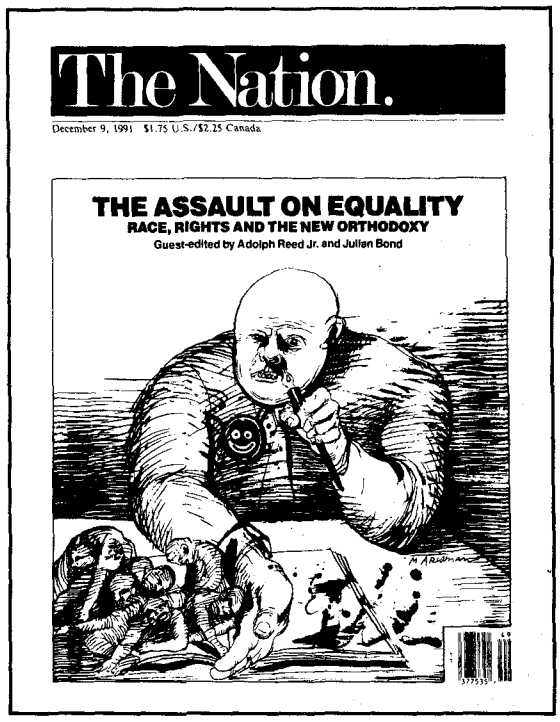
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of health care reforms that cost tax dollars that appear to benefit someone else.

This perceived division of society is largely false. In fact, the great majority of unacceptable risks are the elderly, who have the highest rate of illness and on whose behalf most health care dollars are spent. The enemy, in other words, is ourselves—a few years down the road. Almost everyone will at some time pass from the preferred to the unacceptable risk group by getting older or by getting sick. The best way to guarantee fairness in health insurance is to place the entire population in a single risk pool and to spread the risk from the disabled and elderly to the healthy and young—the health security approach. Our health care system should reflect the reality that we are all in this together. □

CHOICE IN LOUISIANA

Confessions of a Tampon Terrorist

JEN NESSEL

For a New Yorker living in Los Angeles, jumping into a Louisiana primary was like taking the shuttle to Mars. I went down to work for Louisiana Choice, the political arm of the pro-choice movement in Louisiana. It was involved in many races statewide, but one of its top-tier campaigns was an effort to roust incumbent Representative Louis (Woody) Jenkins out of his seat in the state legislature. I talked to voters who told me they'd vote for an imbecile before they'd vote for Woody Jenkins, and I spoke with one man who told me, "I wouldn't give Woody Jenkins the sweat off my balls if it was wintertime."

We've all breathed our collective sigh of relief now that David Duke has lost his bid for governor, and some of the more cynical among us are hoping he runs for President so he can make Bush squirm in his monogrammed boxers. Plenty has been written about that race, though. I want to tell you about Woody.

Woody's been in the Louisiana state legislature for twelve years. He's the man who drafted the strictest antiabortion legislation in the country, with no exceptions for victims of rape or incest. You may have seen him waving his fetus doll around on *Nightline*. Representative Carl Gunter, one of Woody's buddies and a co-sponsor of the bill, got up on the floor of the legislature and said that, as a racehorse breeder, he knew that some of the very finest horses came from incestuous breeding: Incest isn't really such a bad thing, certainly nothing to get all worked up over.

Woody is responsible for deregulating day care in Louisiana, creating two tiers of service so his fundamentalist church groups could operate facilities at lower costs. You may have seen them in a report on *20/20* walloping their small charges and knocking them around the room. Woody believes in corporal punishment. Never mind the Satanists—I know where I'm not sending my children.

Woody also has something every representative with the second-lowest attendance record in the legislature needs: a hobby. His happens to be re-arming the *contras* and helping out our favorite Latin American dictatorships in whatever way he can. He and his wife run a charity called Friends of the Americas. Together with his brother-in-law (who's no longer involved), they skimmed almost $500,000 off their "Friends" last year. Personally, I'd prefer that the money stay in Woody's pocket rather than go to its intended destinations, but I'm sure some of his donors wouldn't see it that way. Woody is no small potatoes, either. Lawrence Walsh, special prosecutor for the Iran/*contra* scandal, went down to Baton Rouge to check him out, but couldn't find enough to go ahead with an indictment. Still, a friend of mine went out drinking one night and met a woman who used to be a stewardess on one of Woody's private jets. She knew what his cargo was and so did everyone else in town.

Woody, by the way, is a Democrat.

Well, one fine day when Woody wasn't looking, he got redistricted. Suddenly his constituency was more educated, more professional, and they thought Woody was arrogant. And embarrassing. He was going to have to fight for this one, and the abortion issue was prime battleground.

Early on, Woody sent out a letter marked "Personal" on legislature stationery to his constituents. Real personal. He told 19,000 of them some things he'd only been able to share with his family and a few of his closest friends until he just couldn't keep it to himself any longer. He was being harassed by the "abortionists," receiving death threats and obscene phone calls. Yes, some people had urged him to stay away from the Capitol because he was in great personal danger, but he had a duty to his office and would continue to uphold it no matter what the risk. And the risks were great. Why, he and his family had received packages from a group of abortionists in California (push that button, Woody!) containing used sanitary napkins. He could only wonder whether they were infected with the AIDS virus.

Now, they don't much like out-of-staters in Louisiana (and no wonder, since we keep sending them bloody Maxipads). Woody knew how to use that one just right. In the last weeks before the primary, he mailed out a flow chart titled "The N.O.W. Connection," which showed the funds and support gushing from the National Organization for Women and "other radical groups" to his opponent, Sandy Ashby. For no particular reason, the only highlighted box on the page featured the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Let me tell you a little about Sandy Ashby. She's a moderate Republican grandmother, a Chamber of Commerce type. (In Louisiana, primaries are open, so anyone can vote for anyone.) Ashby happens to be pro-choice and was at one time a lobbyist for the statewide Coalition for Reproductive Freedom. She is not now, nor has she ever been, a member of NOW, NARAL or the A.C.L.U. I must say I felt a little silly defending her on those grounds to the voters. If they only knew that I, too, was from California. I spoke with one woman who was no longer planning to vote for Ashby, hav-

Jen Nessel is a freelance organizer and writer.

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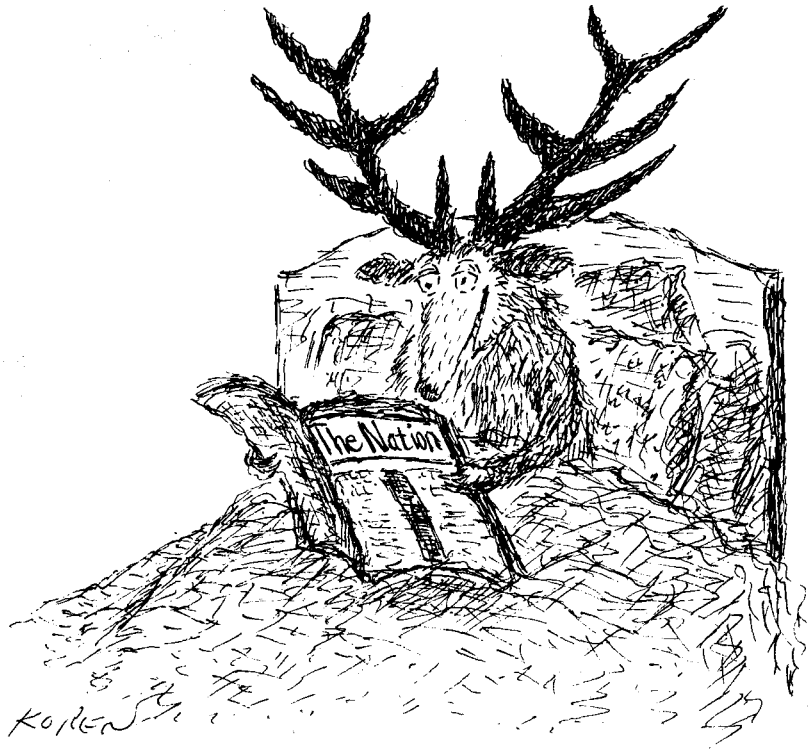

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ing been told by Woody's people that she was a member of the A.C.L.U. and that it supports the Klan. I thought my head was going to explode.

In the final week, when campaigns always get their dirtiest and it's too late for damage control, Woody's supporters started phoning voters and spreading it on thick. They distorted Ashby's position on the homestead exemption (a very important property tax issue in Louisiana). They said she supported forced busing, which was a fabrication. Six days before the election, they said she supported mandatory sex education in elementary schools; three days out it was kindergarten and the day before, we were down to nursery school. If anyone had thought to tape these conversations, Woody would have been in some serious trouble.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that negative campaigning backfires. It may disgust voters and it may even keep some of them from the polls, but when the time comes to pull that lever, punch out that card or check off that box, it works. (And don't tell me the pundits don't get a secret kick out of it too.) Ashby lost a lot of her support in those last days, but she made it into the runoff. It was too late to pick up enough votes to pull it out, though, and Woody won with 54 percent of the vote in the general election.

Louisiana voters knew that a David Duke as governor would have cost Louisiana a lot of tourist and convention revenues, not to mention the Super Bowl; and he would have been something of a national embarrassment. Woody's not going to cost them a penny. Louisianians don't like it when out-of-staters send money to candidates, but when the money's going for a nice bowl of gumbo, a Hurricane cocktail and a hotel room, that's a different story.

More important, choice can be a winning issue in the South only when it's played as a get-the-gummint-off-our-backs issue. Most N.R.A. members are pro-choice, right? But as soon as it becomes a women's issue and groups like NOW and NARAL get mentioned, it's dead in the water. The only thing worse than having the government tell you what to do is having a woman tell you. Secretly, we're all just a bunch of tampon terrorists anyway. □

'Advisers'

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

Thus Hoover never agreed to develop an economic plan for Russia. Instead, Horaney says, "the advice that's come from Hoover has mostly been in occasional papers, low-key presentations and face-to-face meetings in Moscow with people from the Yeltsin government, almost on an ad hoc basis." The Hoover advice is simple: Russia should go "cold turkey" and move to capitalism without much central coordination or Western financial aid. It should privatize industry promptly and eliminate the state from as many activities as possible.

Much of the work of the Hoover team consists of criticizing its main rivals, who are found not in Russia but at Harvard University. The Harvard group, led by political scientist Graham Allison, recommends that the United States and its Western allies create a new Marshall Plan, providing the Union government with billions of dollars in financial assistance to bring about a gradual, controlled capitalist transformation.

Such proposals are anathema to Judy Shelton, a member of the Hoover team of Yeltsin advisers, who has insistently sounded the same monotonous note in a dozen Op-Ed articles: no loans to the Soviets; no loans to the Russians. She gives the same advice to Yeltsin: Don't accept the West's "gifts"—that would amount to going on "welfare." The problem with sending food to the Russians, Shelton argues, is that it "gets eaten and otherwise used up," and "we also don't want 280 million permanent wards feeding off the West." Financial aid from the West will only encourage "an exalted role for government" instead of "private property rights" and "solid private investment," which, she argues, will solve their problems.

Shelton contended in a recent book that countries that "want to be accepted as trading partners" in the world economy "should work to have something worthwhile to trade. . . . There is more to superpower status than sheer military might." Although this advice was directed at the Soviet Union, it applies equally to the United States.

Another member of the Hoover team is Mikhail Bernstam, a Russian émigré who, as late as 1987, was referring to the Soviet Union as the Evil Empire. Writing in *The New Republic*, he criticized Reagan for lifting President Jimmy Carter's 1980 grain embargo on the Soviet Union; as a result, he argued, Reagan had "done more to preserve the collectivist system in the Soviet Union than perhaps any previous occupant of the White House." Bernstam has some equally bizarre ideas about domestic economic and social policy, arguing in a *Wall Street Journal* Op-Ed that blacks "gained the most" during the Reagan years because the President's refusal to raise the minimum wage during a time of inflation created job opportunities for them. Minimum wage laws, he concluded, are a "racist" policy to "remove blacks from the labor market."

Edward Lazear and Charles McLure Jr. also serve on the Hoover team. Lazear, a labor economist, lists among his notable publications a study of "Retail Pricing and Clearance Sales," certainly a subject on which the Russians have much to learn. He has also criticized proposals for mandatory severance pay, which, he argues, will increase unemployment. McLure, a former Reagan Administration Treasury Department appointee, claims credit for developing "the basis of the President's tax reform proposals to Congress." If he's giving Yeltsin the same fiscal advice, Russia could be drowning in debt just as we are. McLure's tax plan for the Russians is based on the fact that the country lacks an Internal Revenue Service capable of evaluating tax returns and going after cheaters. He recommends that income taxes be withheld from workers' pay, with no deductions permitted. Under this system, capitalists would not file returns.

A second institution with an agreement to provide advice to Yeltsin is Pepperdine University, a Christian bastion that commands the hilltop above the star-studded fleshpots

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of the Malibu colony. The school advertises its "attention to Christian values" and its chapel requirement for undergraduates. Pepperdine's ties to the Reagan Administration are even stronger than its ties to the Church of Christ. William Rehnquist was teaching at Pepperdine when he heard about his confirmation as Chief Justice of the United States. Arthur Laffer, guru of Reaganomics, recently spent two years teaching there. Speakers on campus have included Nancy Reagan, Alexander Haig, George Will and Associate Justice Antonin Scalia. Contributors include Reagan's Attorney General Edwin Meese, who donates $1,000 a year to Pepperdine, as does Reagan himself. The school has had its embarrassments: In 1989 former Pepperdine president William Banowsky agreed to pay $754,000 in fines and penalties to the Securities and Exchange Commission to settle insider-trading charges. No doubt the Russians can learn something from his example.

The Pepperdine School of Business and Management is "assisting several major executive training institutes in Russia," according to business school dean James Wilburn, and "has been asked to develop a series of TV programs on free markets and private property to air in the Soviet Union."

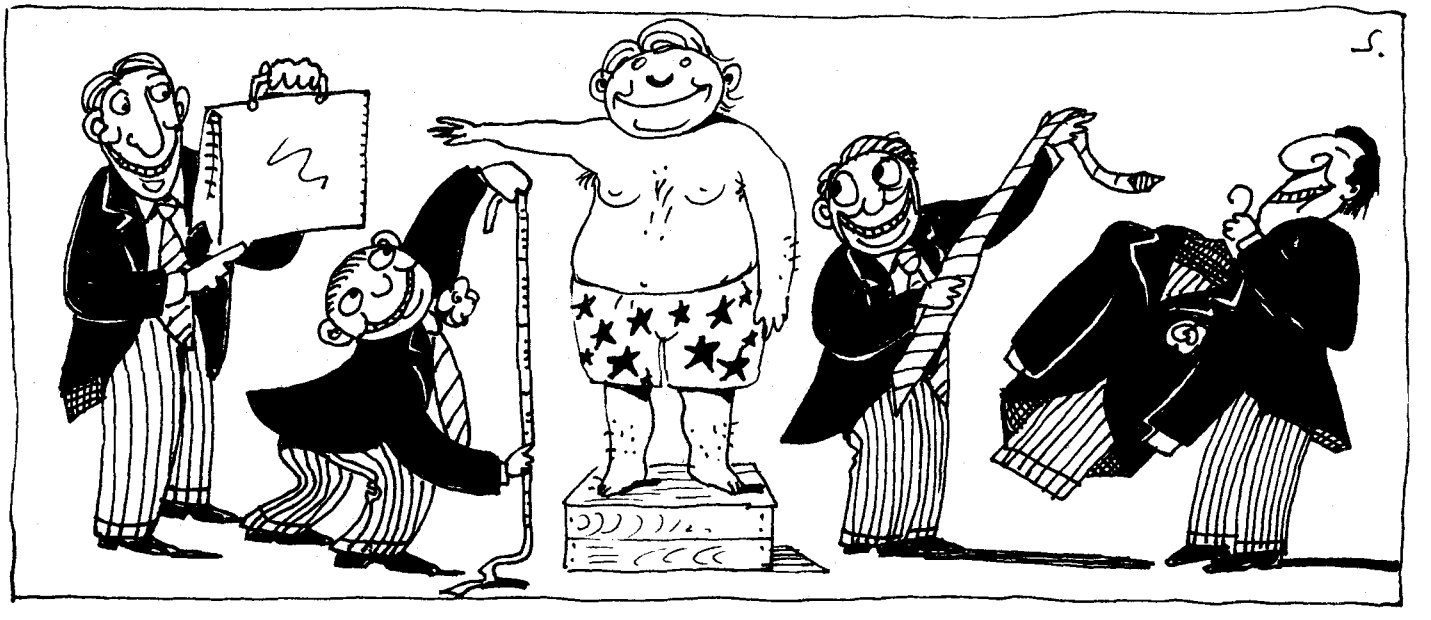
Paul Weyrich also claims to serve as an adviser to Yeltsin. Weyrich occupies the far right-wing reaches of the American political landscape. His greatest claim to fame is that he helped found the Moral Majority and named it; the organization's first crusade was tax exemptions for Christian schools. Weyrich's record as an analyst of Soviet affairs is, to put it mildly, flawed. He warned President Reagan not to make arms-reduction agreements with Gorbachev, even when two-thirds of the missiles to be destroyed were Soviet. In 1988, when Gorbachev announced he would withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Weyrich led a delegation of conservatives to meet with Reagan. They argued that Gorbachev's action was a trick and that the Soviets planned to re-enter the country. Weyrich later recalled that Reagan "insisted that he simply knew more about what was going on." It's hard to think of another occasion on which Reagan could accurately make such a claim.

Apparently Weyrich is not advising Yeltsin to institute tax breaks for Christian schools in Russia, abolish abortion rights or adopt other Moral Majority proposals. Instead, he has concentrated on providing "political training" for Yeltsin and his team, according to Burton Pines, vice president of the Heritage Foundation. Weyrich's lessons for Yeltsin have included "how to use the press," or what *The Washington Times* called "instruction in media manipulation." The result: During the coup, Weyrich told the *Times*, Yeltsin was "doing things right out of our training presentation" (which presumably includes standing on a tank and waving a flag). Weyrich is thus touted as having played "a significant part in Yeltsin's rise to the pinnacle of Soviet power."

Allen Weinstein is another of the many who bill themselves as advisers to Yeltsin. Weinstein, described by *The Washington Post* as "Boris Yeltsin's Man in D.C.," is the former Smith College historian best known for his 1978 book *Perjury*, which argued that Whittaker Chambers was right when he accused Alger Hiss of espionage. More recently Weinstein has devoted himself to proving the "Bulgarian connection" conspiracy theory, arguing that the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II was the work of Bulgarian intelligence, masterminded by the K.G.B. This past April, Weinstein set up and headed an international commission to investigate the theory, a favorite of Robert Gates, Bush's recently confirmed Director of Central Intelligence. But, as the Senate Intelligence Committee hearings established in October, the C.I.A. had strong evidence that the Soviet Union had nothing to do with the papal shooting. Even Gates eventually admitted that his presentation of the evidence was mistaken, but Weinstein apparently has not abandoned the Bulgarian connection.

Weinstein's principal vehicle as Yeltsin adviser is the Center for Democracy, of which he is founder and president and which helped schedule Yeltsin's visit to the United States in June. On that trip, Weinstein's center gave Yeltsin a prize at a Washington dinner that was attended by Dan Quayle; Yeltsin delivered a speech describing Russia as "a huge market for foreign goods, technologies and investment" that "would open entirely new prospects for the entire world."

During the failed Soviet coup in August, Andrei Kozyrev,



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Foreign Minister of the Russian federation, telephoned Weinstein with a statement, later printed in *The Washington Post*, calling on the West to resist the coup. As a result of receiving this and other statements, Weinstein was considered more of an expert on the coup than many other Yeltsin advisers, and he appeared on both *Nightline* and *Face the Nation*, although he did not have a lot to say. On *Face the Nation* he proclaimed, "I do think that we know who's on first—it's Boris Yeltsin."

Nightline reported that "4,870 miles from the hardball politics of the [Soviet] Congress of People's Deputies is the quiet back room of a Washington office guiding Russia's revolutionaries." On the screen, viewers saw Weinstein on the telephone, telling someone, presumably a Russian, "The Prime Minister and the deputy prime ministers and all the others, they're going to have to establish some structure of communication." This advice no doubt turned the tide in Yeltsin's favor.

The Americans seeking to teach the Russians to love capitalism face an uphill battle.

Nightline also reported that Weinstein was invited by Yeltsin "to set up a liaison office in Moscow to provide assistance in the formation of a new democratic government." Paul Nathanson, program director of the Center for Democracy, told me this Moscow office may organize "a teleconference involving Russian government officials and U.S. businessmen" and will include an "information center" to "provide journals and books to Russian citizens—like U.S. Information Agency information centers, but more informal." If this is how Weinstein is "guiding Russia's revolutionaries" to capitalist democracy, they are in bad shape.

Allen Weinstein isn't the only one claiming to be "Yeltsin's man in D.C." O. Roy Chalk, an 84-year-old Washington real estate baron and entrepreneur, describes himself as "Washington representative of Russian President Boris Yeltsin." Chalk signed a contract last December with Russian Prime Minister Ivan Silayev promising to raise $5 billion to support the privatization of the Russian economy and to serve as the Russian government's liaison to U.S. government agencies; the Russians reportedly promised to pay Chalk $3 million a year, of which $600,000 is his personal salary. His advice to the Russians is to forget about refurbishing existing industries and instead "start from scratch, like the Japanese did after Hiroshima. . . . Start brand new industries, new factories, new people, new everything!"

Chalk's fundraising has not been going well. Soliciting investments in Russia, he sent out more than a thousand letters to U.S. businesses, but *The Washington Post* found that only eight replies "could be viewed as even remotely encouraging." The Russians aren't planning to pay his $3 million fee until Chalk raises the promised billions, the Associated Press reports, and a Soviet Embassy spokesperson told the *Post* that Yeltsin "has no connection whatever" to Chalk. (Chalk did not return my calls.)

Yeltsin's political advisers who claim to be teaching him how democracy works apparently have not informed him that one-man rule is anathema to a democratic society. Since the failed coup, Yeltsin has been widely criticized both in Russia and in this country for his autocratic actions. He has claimed the authority to remove from office local officials he deems uncooperative, and he has ordered the postponement of all elections and referendums in Russia until December 1992. And U.S. corporations operating in former Communist countries are finding that the cold-turkey approach to capitalist restoration advocated by Yeltsin's American advisers poses immense problems. When Pepsi bought the Polish chocolate maker Wedel in August for $25 million, it discovered that the company ran a health clinic, a rehabilitation center, two nursery schools and a recreation center for its workers and their families. It also provided housing for retirees. The shock treatment recommended by the Hoover types and others requires that these "free" social services be ended; however, according to *Business Week*, Pepsi has decided to retain most of the services, at least for the moment.

The transformation recommended by Yeltsin's American advisers is the same plan the Poles put into practice on January 1, 1990 [see Jon Wiener, "The Sachs Plan in Poland: Capitalist Shock Therapy," June 25, 1990]. The Russians need to study the Polish experience closely. The *Los Angeles Times* reports that capitalist shock treatment has left Poland with "runaway inflation and staggering unemployment." Even *The Wall Street Journal* worries that the cold-turkey strategy is a high-risk one for Russia: "Public pain and social turbulence" may lead the Russian people to conclude that "capitalism doesn't work" and to look for something else.

The Americans seeking to teach the Russians to love capitalism thus face an uphill battle. A Times-Mirror poll conducted in September found that only 20 percent of Russians favor "free-market capitalism of the U.S. or German type." The largest group, 30 percent, favored Swedish-style socialism, while another 24 percent favored "a more democratic type of socialism in Russia." A democratic leader of Russia would listen to them, rather than to Yeltsin's American advisers.

Despite the claims made by various right-wing institutions in the United States that they are "Yeltsin advisers," there's precious little evidence that any of them is doing anything significant in or for Russia. The Hoover Institution is "keeping the lines of communication open," Pepperdine is offering executive training sessions, Paul Weyrich is providing "media manipulation" lessons, Allen Weinstein is opening a library, O. Roy Chalk is failing to raise American capital. All this suggests that the most important audience for Yeltsin's American advisers is not the Yeltsinites—it's the Americans. The experts now have a new reason to publish Op-Ed pieces in *The New York Times*, to answer Ted Koppel's respectful questions, to proclaim the promise of capitalism in a dozen different venues. The collapse of Communism threatened America's cold warriors with obsolescence; they have now found a new raison d'être. □

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READING AROUND.

ELIZABETH POCHODA

Notes From the Other Europe

A remarkable speech by Vaclav Havel, delivered at Lehigh University on the occasion of his receipt of an honorary degree, can be found in the December 5 **New York Review of Books**. In it, Havel meditates on the meaning of home and envisions a multidimensional state based on the notion, one thus capable of reconciling conflicting loyalties. Sound wifty? Try this:

> To establish the state on any other principle than the civic principle—on the principle of ideology, of nationality or religion, for instance—means making one aspect of home superior to all the others, and thus reduces us as people, reduces our natural world. And that hardly ever leads to anything good. Most wars and revolutions, for example, came about precisely because of this one-dimensional conception of the state.

The only puzzling aspect of the speech is Havel's assumption that American statesmen and scholars are similarly capacious in their view of the state and that their guidance is somehow necessary to ease Czechoslovakia's passage into the future. Let's face it, American statesmen and scholars will read this speech as so much squishheaded nonsense. Havel is, as usual, on his own.

Writing in the same issue of the **NYRB**, Nadine Gordimer rescues the novels of Joseph Roth from ill-deserved obscurity. Though in print here thanks to the Overlook Press, Roth's work, which chronicles the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire up to the time of *Anschluss*, has had precious few readers. But as Gordimer points out, apart from its virtues as fiction, "Passages in Roth's work, about the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, could with scarcely a change describe what has happened in Yugoslavia in 1991." If that tempts you, start with *The Radetsky March*.

Notes From the Old Europe

In its December special issue on World War II, **American Heritage** features "Secret Treason," an account by the late Fulton Oursler of being summoned by the Duke of Windsor in 1940 to listen to his defense of Hitler and convey his plans for appeasement to Roosevelt. One more nail in the Duke's fascist coffin, you say. Yes, but those of us who thought the Duke husbanded his energies for golf and sponging off rich Americans will be surprised that he also took so much time off to advance the Nazi cause.

Dungeons and Dragons

Read enough about Danny Casolaro? Try the definitive take on this newly minted martyr to journalism and conspiracy theories in the current **Vanity Fair**. Ron Rosenbaum, who has been sucked into the vortex of a few paranoid intrigues himself over the years, follows Casolaro's quixotic pursuit of the Big Story—one that would link B.C.C.I., Iran/*contra* and the October Surprise in a single elaborate net (several weeklies have run accounts; David Corn's appeared in these pages October 28). Like the pursuit of V. in Thomas Pynchon's novel of that name, there is nothing that can't fit into Casolaro's scheme. V. was simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. Ditto Casolaro's octopus, with its tentacles in the Gambino crime family, the assassination of Salvador Allende and the plot to introduce slow-acting brain viruses into meat patties (oh, yes). You name it, it's here, along with appearances by Lyndon LaRouche, the leftist Christic Institute, the rightist Accuracy in Media and lots of obligatory dark figures with names like "Double Deuce" and "Clark Gable." Did Casolaro commit suicide or was he murdered for knowing too much? Rosenbaum puts the chances of murder at "a disturbing five percent," because the fellow was, after all, on to a little something. But that's not the point. What Rosenbaum understands but most others on the Casolaro beat do not are the psychological satisfactions of making paranoid connections and the dangerous natural affinity between spooks and journalists.

Rich Man's Toys

XXIst century is one of those mysteriously opulent productions that crop up every so often for no apparent reason except that someone had enough money to put it together. With an odd trim size (14x9), a collection of high-profile writers and artists (Ian Buruma, Harold Brodkey, W.S. Merwin, Donald Judd, Peter Sellars) and a forbidding price ($7.50), it has every appearance of high foolishness. And yet, there are some gems here. Especially the poems, journal and interview with the late James Schuyler, a poet whose work has frequently made me laugh out loud. Here is Schuyler on the work habits of his friends W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman: "Wystan was not taking any hocus-pocus about people not getting down to work. He got up every morning around eight, popped his amphetamine, and got right to it. Wystan was also very strict with Chester about his drinking. Wystan believed you had two martinis before dinner and then just wine after that." Elsewhere there is a funny and promising excerpt from Darryl Pinckney's forthcoming novel about the anxieties of blue-chip blacks, *High Cotton*.

Child's Play

The December release of Steven Spielberg's *Hook* has already elicited two articles describing the director as a prisoner of childhood. In **M**, Aaron Latham spins out an extended parallel between Spielberg and *Hook*'s progenitor J.M. Barrie, creator of *Peter Pan*. And **Movieline** has hired a psychiatrist to employ the coarse tools of his trade to reduce Spielberg to a case of arrested development. Look for more disapproving glances at the director in the weeks to come and see if anyone gives Spielberg's movies credit for understanding the paradoxical fact that the culture is at once childish, child-centered and indifferent to the needs of children.

Elsewhere

In its year-end double issue, **Rolling Stone** gives John Colapinto a lot of space for a piece on three men in Maine dying of AIDS. The report is remarkable for the closeness of its focus, the patience of its accumulated detail and the author's reluctance to play up his material. And in the **Washington Journalism Review** you'll find two pieces that explain why the real estate coverage in most newspapers is so full of happy talk that it reads like the P.R. branch of the real estate industry. That's because for the most part, it is.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Greed Is All Right

MAX HOLLAND

DEN OF THIEVES. *By James B. Stewart. Simon and Schuster. 493 pp. $25.*

If *Den of Thieves* is just half accurate, Wall Street's mores and culture in the 1980s bore an amazing resemblance to the Mafia's. As depicted by James Stewart, Wall Street was a world unto itself greased by the exchange of favors. Money, power and sex defined status. Providing for one's family was the ostensible excuse for any behavior, and only suckers played without an edge. Wall Street argot, as in "This company is going down" or "We'll squeeze the board of directors," bespoke violence, albeit of an economic kind. The universe outside was viewed with contempt, and Securities and Exchange Commission lawyers (the cops on the beat) were fools too stupid to make it on the Street. Whenever the S.E.C. mounted an investigation, Wall Street prized silence and loyalty above telling the truth. In practice, though, betrayal to save one's own skin was commonplace. *Den of Thieves* reads like the script from Martin Scorsese's *GoodFellas*, with investment banker Martin Siegel in the role played by Ray Liotta.

The great strength of this book lies in its use of S.E.C. documents and federal court records, supplemented by interviews, to construct a story valuable, above all, for its coherence. Readers who closely followed newspaper accounts of the criminal misdeeds of Dennis Levine, Martin Siegel, Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken, the four main culprits in *Den of Thieves*, will still have their eyes opened by Stewart, a Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist with a law degree. Even the outstanding coverage of *The Wall Street Journal*, where Stewart is front-page editor, is no substitute for a sustained narrative that weaves together new information with half-forgotten facts. In particular, the means by which the government lawyers bring down "the Russian" (Boesky) and then Milken is crucial to understanding the whole sorry mess. Half the book is devoted to that grinding, slow-motion chase, most of which has never been reported, and it is the better half of the book.

Few characters emerge with their reputations intact, fewer still with their reputations enhanced. Of the latter, the most prominent is Federal Judge Kimba Wood (a Reagan appointee, it must be pointed out), who sentenced Milken to ten years in prison precisely because he committed "only crimes that were unlikely to be detected." Wood is to this scandal what John Sirica was to Watergate, a judge who restored some faith in the system, although Sirica had to work much harder and longer. Stewart's other heroes are the S.E.C. and Justice Department attorneys who persevered, finding resolve in the knowledge that they were, as one of them put it, "engaged in the single most important thing we would ever do in our lives." Admirable characters outside the government are harder to find. Perhaps only Harvey Pitt acquitted himself well. Pitt, a former S.E.C. general counsel who represented, among others, Ivan Boesky, managed to serve the interests of his clients and justice at the same time.

Wall Street in the eighties was not merely about illegality, it was also about the total collapse of business ethics, as Wall Street's best and brightest stole shareholders blind.

That Milken emerges as the most malign individual among a large cast of unsavory characters is no surprise. As late as 1986 Boesky seemed to have that mantle all to himself. In that year he defined the spirit of the eighties with his "greed is all right" commencement speech at Berkeley, not uncoincidentally marking Ronald Reagan's ultimate triumph over the campus that launched the Free Speech Movement. But Stewart rightly shows that Boesky, the arbitrageur, paled next to Milken, the junk bond king. It may have been a symbiotic relationship, but it was not equal. Boesky did Milken's bidding, and so the decade ended with Milken as the embodiment of greed.

I grew up in Los Angeles at roughly the same time as Milken, and I still find it hard to comprehend what a cheerleader from Birmingham High School (the Valley, no less) wrought. Start with Richard Nixon's character flaws, add the zealotry and utter shamelessness of Oliver North, and the result might begin to approach Milken, an insecure, charismatic, obsessive accountant's son who aimed to dominate the whole financial world. At some point Milken apparently decided that no big deal was going to be done without him, requiring him to seem unstoppable if not omnipotent. To this end he cheated his clients, his partners, his subordinates and his firm, Drexel Burnham Lambert. He tried to prevent publication of a book that dared criticize his junk bond empire. Once the S.E.C. began to close in, Milken paid what amounted to hush money to try to keep his staff closemouthed. In all probability he destroyed evidence. Finally, in a last-ditch effort to stave off certain indictment, Milken underwrote an enormous public relations campaign calculated to neutralize public opinion, if not turn popular outrage into outright acclaim. Because any Manhattan jury was likely to include black jurors, special efforts were made to propagandize the black community. Fortunately these did not work, although Milken managed to enlist Jesse Jackson in this cynical exercise, yet another reminder that Jackson's ego is larger than his politics.

Milken's lawyers were a true extension of their client. Edward Bennett Williams, the attorney hired by Milken immediately after Boesky pleaded guilty, sought to protect his client from indictment by keeping everyone at Drexel "inside the tent pissing out" instead of on each other. At no time did he ever attempt to get the truth from his client, unlike Harvey Pitt. In effect, it seems, Williams connived to obstruct justice.

The tactics of Milken's co-counsel, Arthur Liman, were even worse. When he became chief counsel to the Congressional committee investigating the Iran/*contra* scandal in 1987, Liman said his re-

Max Holland is a contributing editor of The Nation. *His book* When the Machine Stopped *(Harvard Business School Press, 1989) is the first study of a leveraged buyout.*

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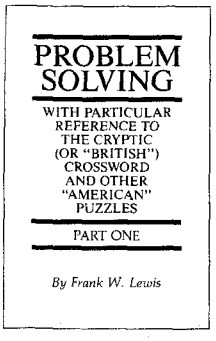
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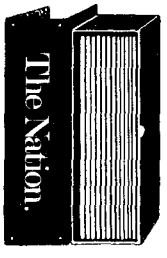

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spect for the rule of law compelled him to put aside his lucrative corporate practice in order to perform a public service. But his defense of Milken suggests he has one set of legal ethics for government officials and another for wealthy private citizens. Just as Ollie North and Brendan Sullivan put North's interrogators on trial, Liman sought to make Milken's critics and prosecutors the defendants.

It was Liman who ordered that steps be taken to stop publication of Connie Bruck's *The Predators' Ball* "either through contacts" at Simon and Schuster "or in court." It was Liman who suggested that Milken try his case in public by hiring Linda Robinson, a P.R. flack who proceeded to try to persuade America that Mike Milken was a "national treasure" instead of a national disgrace. After Williams died of cancer, full control of Milken's defense fell to Liman, who clung to Williams's scorched-earth tactics and continued to indulge Milken's fantasies of complete innocence. When Drexel chairman Fred Joseph advocated a settlement with the S.E.C. in a desperate effort to save the Drexel franchise, Liman accused him of "selling out" Milken, as if Drexel were an investment bank in Nazi Germany shedding itself of innocent Jewish partners. "That's the first step towards concentration camps," Liman told Joseph.

Along with his sharply drawn portraits of right- and wrongdoers, Stewart sheds light on a neglected aspect of the frenzied eighties, namely, the care and feeding of the business press and other media by junk bond and takeover artists. But Stewart raises almost as many questions about the media as he answers. Martin Peretz, editor in chief of *The New Republic*, was a big investor in Boesky's arbitrage fund. Did that fact have anything to do with the adulatory review of Boesky's 1985 book, *Merger Mania*, that appeared in *T.N.R.*? (One of Boesky's assertions was that he never made any "undue profits.") And why is it that none of the major networks, or PBS, ever put together a serious documentary about buyouts and junk bonds, a phenomenon that affected hundreds of thousands of jobs, pensions and benefits? Is it because *60 Minutes* producer Don Hewitt socializes with buyout artists like Henry Kravis, or because Kravis sits on the board of WNET, the PBS affiliate in New York?

For all its power and value, *Den of Thieves* falls measurably short of the distinction some reviewers would give it: that it is the definitive book about Wall Street during the eighties. Stewart's reportorial skills are considerable, but the book is stingy when it comes to going beyond a description of who did what to an interpretation of why things happened. The story begs, at many points, for Stewart to stop and paint the big analytic picture before he resumes his admittedly compelling narrative. He does so too infrequently. The underlying reasons for the eighties' speculative boom are inadequately discussed in three paragraphs on page eighty-three. The devolution of deal making over the decade is largely missing, along with significant nuances in the battles for corporate control. Even the October stock market crashes of 1987 and 1989 are treated almost as asides rather than events integral to the story. The sickening transformation of Wall Street from a collective means of financing the economy into a free-for-all looting of corporate America is never fully explained.

A closely related drawback is Stewart's focus on criminal activity: insider trading, the "parking" of stocks so as to conceal true ownership, and manipulation of share prices. This emphasis is understandable, given Stewart's reliance on court documents that resulted in criminal convictions. But Wall Street in the eighties was not merely about illegality, though there was plenty of that. It was also about the utter collapse of business ethics, manipulation of the tax code by Wall Street's best and brightest, who stole shareholders blind and then justified epic displays of avarice by claiming to maximize shareholder value. None of these activities are illegal, but they constitute more than half the depravity that was Wall Street during the Reagan years.

Den of Thieves replicates, curiously enough, the self-centered world view of Wall Street. In fact, it seldom leaves the Street (Milken's office in Beverly Hills notwithstanding). In his prologue, Stewart takes note of the big, consequential context, the corporations fatally crippled by criminal and unethical activity, the thousands of jobs lost to unserviceable debt, forced bankruptcies and depleted pension plans. But those consequences are only asserted, and never shown to be true in the same searing detail Stewart uses to reveal Boesky's insider trading. The definitive book would show what happened to Rexene, or any one of hundreds of companies subjected to Milken-financed raids or buyouts.

The exception to this parochialism is Stewart's occasional reference to Washington, but he still does not tell enough

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about this aspect. Never mind the do-nothing Treasury Department and the cheerleading by economists at the S.E.C., which was firmly in the grip of laissez-faire ideologues for most of the eighties. The nonresponse of Congressional Democrats to Wall Street's speculative orgy should have been an important component of *Den of Thieves*. Stewart never mentions the Alliance for Capital Access, a lobbying front that Milken organized in 1985 with one purpose in mind: to beat back any attempt to rescind the tax deduction for interest on corporate debt. From 1985 through 1990 the alliance raised and spent $4.9 million lobbying Congress to protect the one deduction absolutely critical to Milken's Ponzi scheme. Instead, Stewart merely tantalizes the reader with isolated facts, such as the $23,900 in campaign donations from Drexel that helped turn liberal Senator Timothy Wirth from a critic into a defender of junk bonds.

All these gaps explain why Stewart concludes by proposing the most limited reforms imaginable, such as a statutory definition of insider trading (according to Stewart's own book, Martin Siegel always knew when he was illegally sharing privileged information despite the vagueness of current law). The problems are much more fundamental. Basic issues of corporate governance and accountability need to be reopened and resolved if the corporate form of organization is going to benefit society and not just yield unconscionable rewards to a handful of bankers, lawyers and C.E.O.s.

Now that the eighties bubble has burst and Milken is in jail sans hairpiece until 1993 or thereabouts, it might seem like this story is mostly over. But recently Milken reduced Arthur Liman's role in favor of that famed lawyer of last resort, Alan Dershowitz. Milken reportedly was inspired by Dershowitz's success in the Claus von Bulow case, and there is speculation that, far from seeking a mere reduction in Milken's sentence or defending Milken in $1 billion worth of pending civil suits, Dershowitz may try to withdraw his client's guilty plea.

The lawyer of last resort is using the tactic of last resort. Virtually all the negative characters in the book are Jewish, says Dershowitz, and gratuitously identified as such. To make his point, Dershowitz took out a $40,000 full-page ad in *The New York Times* attacking both Stewart's book and the person who reviewed it in that paper (occasional *Nation* contributor Michael Thomas) as anti-Semitic. Stewart also says a private detective has been asking friends about his private attitude toward Jews. It is true that Stewart neglects the sociology of Wall Street, which would show the outsider status of Jews, not to mention other minorities. Seen in this context, the criminal behavior of Milken et al. was a kind of retributive assault on corporate citadels unfairly closed to them. That is what happens when people of great ability are treated dishonorably by those in power—they break the rules. But this lapse is not proof of any anti-Semitism on the part of Stewart, it's just a shortcoming of the book.

It may take a journalist with a novelist's skills to write the definitive account of Wall Street during the eighties. Until then, read Stewart's book. □

Not on Your Life

DAVID SCHIFF

THE FALL OF FIRST EXECUTIVE: The House That Fred Carr Built. *By Gary Schulte. HarperBusiness. 288 pp. $21.*

In 1912, J.P. Morgan told a skeptical Senate committee that character, not money or property, was the basis of commercial credit. By the 1980s, as wheeler-dealers took over corporate America with nominal down payments and loads of debt, substandard character as well as substandard collateral became commonplace, and Michael Milken's maxim, "Capital isn't scarce, vision is," turned out to be just a fancy way of saying "A fool and his money are soon parted."

Gary Schulte's *The Fall of First Executive: The House That Fred Carr Built*, "an insider's account of the biggest insurance failure in history," is an unambitious history of the junk-bond-loving life insurance company that shook up that sleepy industry, helped change the face of corporate finance and then went bust. When Schulte signed on as the First Executive Corporation's chief marketing officer in 1986 he expected to "be exploring new frontiers and traveling at the speed of light." First Executive was such a hot sell that much of his job consisted of turning away prospective agents, and Schulte calls the next five years "the richest" of his career—despite losing most of his net worth. That's due to the man he worked for, a soft-spoken, avuncular money manager named Fred Carr, who first achieved fame during Wall Street's go-go years when he ran the high-flying Enterprise Fund, which collapsed shortly after his departure in 1969.

Carr was teaching a postgraduate finance course at U.C.L.A. and still managing money when, five years later, he joined the troubled First Executive, then the 355th largest life insurance company in America. He quickly solved the company's debt problem "through a long series of complex transactions" and began building sales by creating annuity products to be marketed by stockbrokers.

With the advent of financial deregulation and high interest rates, Carr understood that life insurance was no longer the mortality business but had become the investment business. The key to success was the spread—taking money in at one rate and reinvesting it at a higher one. The introduction of interest-sensitive products such as Universal Life, which emphasized investment more than mortality, revolutionized the industry. Agents no longer had to evoke what would happen to a family if a wage earner died; instead, they could offer highly competitive investment vehicles. First Executive didn't invent interest-sensitive policies any more than Milken invented junk bonds, but it stepped to the forefront.

Although life insurance is, according to the old adage, "sold, not bought," Carr realized that with interest-sensitive policies, the company offering the highest credited rate would get the order. Therefore the key to the business was investing at a higher yield than competitors, but most insurance companies experience similar investment returns because, for conservative reasons, they usually invest in high-grade bonds and long-term mortgages. Enter Michael Milken.

Although First Executive became Drexel's largest customer—as the "underwriter to the underwriters," First Executive bought into almost every Drexel deal—Schulte has no insight into the Milken-Carr relationship, and his story that they sat down over lunch in the 1970s and "decided to change the course of the financial services industry" sounds like

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myth. Unfortunately, Schulte ignores the guts of the business—the investments: "We won't spend much time analyzing the Milken-Drexel junk bond saga," he says, since it's been covered by others.

Propelled by the rocket fuel of junk bonds, Carr achieved yields 25 to 30 percent greater than many of his well-known competitors and, in turn, offered those to policyholders. Schulte does do a good job of explaining how Carr arranged his company's balance sheet. Liabilities (which, basically, are the policyholders' money) were structured by their duration (how long the insurance company is likely to hold that money), ability to be called upon demand and probability that they might be called. Assets were invested with interest rate exposure, liquidity and yield in mind. The idea was to match the duration of the assets with the persistence of the liabilities, thereby minimizing interest rate and reinvestment risk and (in theory) locking in the spread, or profit. *Carr did this better than anyone else,* Schulte tells us.

First Executive's greatest growth didn't come from traditional, or even semitraditional, life insurance products but from single-pay products like annuities and Guaranteed Investment Contracts, which involve only one large premium payment up front. For an insurance company in the asset-accumulation game, these are the ultimate products. By the end of 1989 single-pay products accounted for $13 billion of the $16 billion of policyholder liabilities, and the company owned $8.7 billion in junk bonds. First Executive had become the fifteenth largest life insurance company in America. Much of its success depended on its A+ Best's rating and AAA Standard & Poor's rating, without which it couldn't have attracted large sums of money.

The book bogs down at this point. Schulte devotes forty-one pages to Carr's management style, followed by eighteen pages of the teetotaling vegetarian's innocuous sayings and harmless antics. But his biggest failure is his inability to come to grips with the fact that junk bonds—because they were such disastrous investments in 1989 and 1990—ultimately caused First Executive's collapse, and he keeps trying to lay the blame elsewhere. Schulte calls First Executive the victim of "psychomedia risk," which he describes as: "Even though you do everything right, something unexpected will happen, which creates the perception of failure although the facts don't support it. . . . When this occurs . . . the result is a crisis of confidence . . . which leads to an avalanche of policyholder surrenders." Schulte believes that the company's problems—particularly the run on its assets in 1990 and 1991—were "created by the media" and that the chief antagonist was Joseph Belth, an Indiana University professor of insurance who published the "Insurance Forum," an obscure monthly newsletter. Schulte just can't admit that First Executive's dubious practices and reckless concentration of investments defied the spirit if not the letter of the law, and were dangerous to the well-being of policyholders.

In the end, Schulte can't even make up his mind about his old boss. He says Carr used "poor judgment" but isn't a "crook" (I agree), yet he adds, "On the other hand, the proverbial fat lady in the First Executive Opera has yet to sing." Despite the book's hastily-put-together feel, inaccuracies and lack of an index, it's readable and provides a decent overview of some major changes in the life insurance industry during the past twenty years. But readers looking for a juicy exposé or for an understanding of how the First Executive story fits into the history of American business in the 1980s should be forewarned—Schulte is no fat lady. □

Character Witness

CHUCK WACHTEL

THE SWEET HEREAFTER. *By Russell Banks. HarperCollins. 257 pp. $20.*

Because *The Sweet Hereafter* is smaller in both scope and page count than *Continental Drift* and *Affliction*, Russell Banks's last two novels, it offers an opportunity to see more easily what is central to the power and importance in his work: the ability to write about ordinary people (most of us) without accepting much apparent guidance or influence from the existing literary manners of doing so, or from the common assumptions of our times.

If not for the effects of the failing national economy, the tentacles of mass media and the upscale vacationers who drive north from the city, the small, upstate New York town of Sam Dent, setting of *The Sweet Hereafter*, would otherwise remain isolated in its own particular late-twentieth-century solitude. On a recent winter morning a schoolbus skids off the road, tumbles down an embankment and into a water-filled sand pit. Fourteen of the town's children are killed. The fabric of order in Sam Dent is suddenly torn apart. The novel does not present this in public acts of mourning or violence; there are few overt acts of vengeance or compensation. Rather, we experience the horror, the uncontainable pain, in the voices of the novel's four narrators, who in the aftermath of the accident present to us not only themselves and the facts as they know them; they also present to us the mysterious and inevitable continuance of their lives.

For the most part, their stories remain inside the perimeters of local, more immediate circumstances. As they tell those stories, increasing our access to their inner lives, the characters do not readily give themselves over to larger, universalizing proportions: We must first experience them in their own terms—their ordinary moments, their revelations—before we respond with the secondary wave of *our* understanding. Lionel Trilling has given us a still very serviceable phrase for what realism in fiction does, or should do: *reveal the human fact in the veil of circumstance*. Central to the power of nearly all of Banks's work is that he is first influenced by his subject matter, the people he writes about. In their context the larger issues become less abstracted, less the possession of idea—more theirs, more ours.

Early in *Continental Drift* (1985), for example, its two main characters, a New Hampshire furnace repairman and a poor, young Haitian woman, escape the lives they were born to and begin separate, haphazard, perilous migrations toward more viable, safer, more comprehendable lives. Although the narration remains centered in the movements of these two characters, it expands in size to encompass the unnavigated drift that seems to be so much of life at the end of this half-millennium we might remember as Columbian America. *Affliction* (1989), set in New Hampshire, is the story of the events leading up to a murder and the disappearance of the man who commits it. It is also a story about the legacy of

Chuck Wachtel is author of the novels Joe the Engineer *(William Morrow) and* The Coriolis Effect *(Hanging Loose Books). His latest,* The Gates, *is forthcoming from Viking.*

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male anger—from its untraceable beginnings in a time long before the world that this novel occurs in was ever dreamed of—and its effects on family, community and the culture at large. If it is possible for writers to contain such vast thematic centers in their stories, and if readers are still willing even to attempt to accept delivery of them—in short, if this is to work at all—what is needed is precisely what Banks provides: characters who can be perceived as wholly separate from the conditions their stories make manifest.

As Dolores Driscoll, the bus driver and narrator of the first and last of *The Sweet Hereafter*'s five sections, begins telling her story, the circumstances begin to narrow, to close in around her like a reversal of the circular eddies caused by a stone dropped in water. Dolores has driven the children of Sam Dent to school since 1968, when the bus was her own Dodge station wagon and her own two sons were among the passengers. In the nearly two decades that follow, her husband and companion, Abbott, becomes confined to a wheelchair due to a stroke, making her driver's income the household income; her sons grow up and move on; and the station wagon, which she and the children had named Boomer, is replaced first by a GMC twenty-four seater and, in 1987, "to handle the baby boomers' babies, I'd guess you'd call them, the district had to get me the International fifty-seater."

The second narrator, Billy Ansel, is already widowed when the accident occurs, taking the lives of his two children. A Vietnam vet, owner of a garage, he is a man possessed of a quiet and isolate integrity. He tells us that people who have lost their children "twist themselves into all kinds of weird shapes in order to deny what has happened. Not because of the pain of losing a person they loved—we lose parents and mates and friends, and no matter how painful, it's not the same—but because what has happened is so wickedly unnatural, so profoundly against the necessary order of things, that we cannot accept it."

Mitchell Stephens, Esq., a lawyer who comes up from New York City hoping to represent the families and survivors, is the book's third narrator. Angry, sophisticated, observant, he provides an outsider's view of the other characters and of Sam Dent. In telling us of his own life, particularly as the father of a hopelessly drug-addicted daughter, he places the novel, the accident itself, in the larger, darker context of our times. He tells us we are all losing our children: "I don't know if it was the Vietnam war, or the sexual colonization of kids by industry, or drugs, or TV, or divorce, or what the hell it was; I don't know what are causes and what are effects; but the children are gone. . . . So that trying to protect them is little more than an exercise in denial."

Young Nichole Burnell, a survivor of the accident, has already been forcibly extracted from the fabric of her teenage life by her father, who victimizes her through incest. Outwardly a pretty, popular eighth grader, she lives isolated in an inexpressible silence. The accident, condemning her to a wheelchair for life, completes the process: When we meet her all the connections—to family and friends, to the series of events she had expected to carry her into the future—have already been severed. Nichole is the book's fourth narrator, both a child and a prophet. Hers is perhaps the deepest, clearest view we get into the inner life of Sam Dent.

As readers, caught up in the life of the novel, we make a leap from our burdened and mysterious real lives to something we perceive in the heart of its characters. We seek, and perhaps find, a kind of communion with something larger. Yet since a character is, after all, simply a construct of crafted language, most of what we find there, as in a dream, has to have been ours in the first place. What we seek is ourselves. Yet the life we live and the lives we read about in so many contemporary novels seem to have less and less in common.

In explaining why the storyteller has become a thing of the past, Walter Benjamin told us, "One reason for this phenomenon is obvious: experience has fallen in value." Since he wrote this, the trend has accelerated. Even the complex technologies of fiction we've been steadily evolving since Chekhov cannot keep apace of this devaluation. I see in much of Banks's work a refusal to find this acceptable. Whether vast or local in scope, the foundation for his fiction is experience in its most familiar and simultaneously mysterious circumstance: as we know it, *be* it, before it is crafted into the larger, rarefied context of fictional narrative. We can find it there.

This realism exemplified by Russell Banks is both old-fashioned and new. New because his characters feel as if he first discovered them outside of fiction, not from pre-existing literary or cultural

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models. Old-fashioned because his work is dedicated to what Cynthia Ozick has called (in a wonderful brief essay, "A Short Note on 'Chekhovian' ") "explicit and definitive portraiture and the muscular trajectory of whole lives."

In the final section of *The Sweet Hereafter*, Dolores Driscoll is watching the demolition derby at the Sam Dent County Fair. The town has shunned her since the accident six months ago. On one side of her, her husband sits in his wheelchair; on the other is Billy Ansel, drunk, the state he has most often been in since the accident. Boomer, now the possession of one of the town's young men, is one of the entries. The crowd cheers each time Boomer is hit. The other drivers, understanding the town's desire to punish the car, to punish Dolores, attack with fury. Even so, the old car prevails. As, one by one, the other cars are eliminated and the process intensifies, the crowd begins chanting "Boomer! Boomer!" The whole town has crossed an invisible border. Although things will never be the same, its inhabitants have touched, perhaps only briefly, some source of their collective lives, one that was there before the accident and, through this time of grief and anger, has somehow remained intact. There is, however, no consolation for Dolores Driscoll, no going back:

> Nichole, I, the children who survived the accident, and the children who did not—it was as if we were the citizens of a wholly different town now, as if we were a town of solitaries living in a sweet hereafter, and no matter how the people of Sam Dent treated us, whether they memorialized us or despised us, whether they cheered for our destruction or applauded our victory over adversity, they did it to meet their needs, not ours. Which, since it could be no other way, was exactly as it should be.

The book's narrative does not go beyond this dark, grim time in the life of its characters, yet it offers us a healing clarity. I think this is because these characters, or the human facts they represent outside of fiction, are the first measure of the story's size and shape. And it seems only after taking that initial measurement that Russell Banks, in *The Sweet Hereafter*, brings his passionate and profoundly exact craft to bear. □

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ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

The Sacred Art of Tibet

Since at least the time of Schopenhauer, wisdom has been deemed the particular attribute of the thought and writings of Eastern sages, while compassion has long been ascribed to the historical Buddha, whose enlightenment, after all, was the result of cogitating on human suffering, for which his doctrines proposed a radical cure. "Wisdom and Compassion," accordingly, is a wholly natural title for an exhibition devoted to the sacred art of Tibet, whose religion is based on Buddha's declarations and injunctions. Tibetan art consists largely of paintings and statues of the Buddha himself, as well as of various personages who figure in the increasingly complex cosmology into which the initially simple and parable-based doctrine evolved. This complexity is reflected in the art, which depicts these personages, who have attained varying degrees of enlightenment, enthroned in spaces thronged with other beings, natural and supernatural, spiritual and celestial, whose identity would at best be known to learned practitioners of Tantric Buddhism, as the Tibetan version of the religion is known. The immense distance between the Tantric system and the clear, simple discourses and homilies of the historical Buddha (which seem easily understood and readily applied by the most ordinary of men and women) marks the degree to which an industry of specialists proliferated, whose practices, though meant for the larger benefit of humankind, involve technologies inaccessible to the laity and depend upon knowledge of the most arcane and esoteric order, far indeed from the common understanding to which the Buddha himself made so direct an appeal. And ordinary Tibetans, who may have seen these often dauntingly intricate representations of enlightened beings—human, divine or semidivine—must have been nearly as diffident in supposing they understood what was meant by the art as are we, coming from another tradition, when we encounter them as artifacts from a remote artistic culture. The difference of course is that they must have felt that the truths embodied in these hangings and sculptures were momentous and urgent, and in consequence they had to have felt an accompanying gratitude that there *were* those who grasped such truths and labored for the redemption of the others who barely understood them. The complexity of the art thus had to have reinforced the authority of the priestly class to whose endeavors almost the entirety of Tibetan culture was dedicated. There is thus something *tremendous* in the complexity of Tibetan art. I suppose, questions of artistry to one side, an analogy might be found in those blackboards covered with equations whose meaning is opaque to us, but of whose importance to human understanding and welfare we are assured. And so we gladly support the laboratories, the armies of scientists, whom we appreciate as devoting themselves fully to our behalf by probing the secrets of the real.

Nothing, however, in the educated Westerner's own religious background or in his or her acquaintance with Buddhist doctrine derived from one or another college course in comparative world religions is more likely to register sheer conceptual distance from Tibetan iconography than the fact that the characteristic Tantric emblem is composed of coupled deities in fierce sexual conjunction, locked in the rhythm that rocks the world. I once made a pilgrimage to Khajuraho to see the legendary temples ornamented with gods and goddesses depicted making love (Khajuraho is appropriately a site for honeymooners in India). There is an indolent, sunny eroticism about these handsome lovers, with unforgettable smiles on their faces, however improbably intertwined their legs and arms. They may be the distant ancestors of the Tibetan couplers, but if so, intercourse has been raised in the interim from a source of mutual pleasure to a cosmic principle: Tantric cosmo-copulators are not, one feels, lovers so much as collaborators in genital exercise, and sex appears to have become a means to an end distinct from the recreational and reproductive ends it serves in human life.

The reproductive dimension of sex is thematized in Judaism, and in the covenanted promise of multiplication (which is why the Holocaust is in violation of the covenant, as much for the snuffing out of progenies as for the terrible suffering that underscores it; and why Onan is condemned, not for solitary pleasure but for spilling *seed*). The hedonistic dimension of sex is thematized in Islam, where the word for marriage is that used to denote the sexual act (though

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it is primarily a male prerogative: The Koran says "Women are your tillage," and it is a standing puzzle of what Heaven might hold for women, if men are promised protracted orgasms with sloe-eyed beauties already waiting for them there). Christianity clearly regards sex as an evil and counsels abstinence, though Leo Steinberg, in a brilliant and justly celebrated book on Christ's sexuality, has argued convincingly that Christ hardly could be counted chaste if he lacked the wherewithal to participate in sex; and in general it only makes sense that in taking on the humiliations of the flesh, God must endure the sufferings of sexual craving. Steinberg has demonstrated the extent to which Christ is depicted as sexed in a wide range of Renaissance images, but there is no tradition that Christ partook, though he was not indifferent to sensuous gratification, such as having his feet rubbed with spikenard and rubbed dry with Mary's hair. Mystics in many religions use sexual ecstasy as their best metaphor for overcoming the distance between lover and beloved, and viewers of Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* must be struck by the extreme eroticism of the saint's transport. But the actual use of sex to induce mystical ecstasy must be exceedingly marginal in most world religions. It seems, by contrast, central to Tantra, and though what transpires between earthly lovers in conjugal beds has scant proportion to what appears to be enacted by the gods in Tantric painting and statuary, it seems fairly clear that ritualized intercourse was a way of seeking higher union on the part of adepts. "The central *sadhana* of Tantrism, Buddhist and Hindu alike," writes Agehananada Bharati (an amiable monk and anthropologist born into this life as Leopold Fisher, w .n whom I shared dinners in New York before, alas, he slipped into another life, as he would see the matter), "is the exercise of sexual contact under tantric 'laboratory conditions.' " Bharati describes these conditions in some detail in his book on the Tantric tradition. So adepts, at some symbolic level, enact what is depicted in the art—and there must be some continuity between the ritualized act and its objective correlative.

Anyone the least familiar with Buddhist teaching is aware of the distinction between the so-called Lesser and Greater Vehicles—between the Theravada and the Mahayana practices. The first concerns individuals who seek release from karma (and hence release from suffering) by various renunciations, but chiefly by

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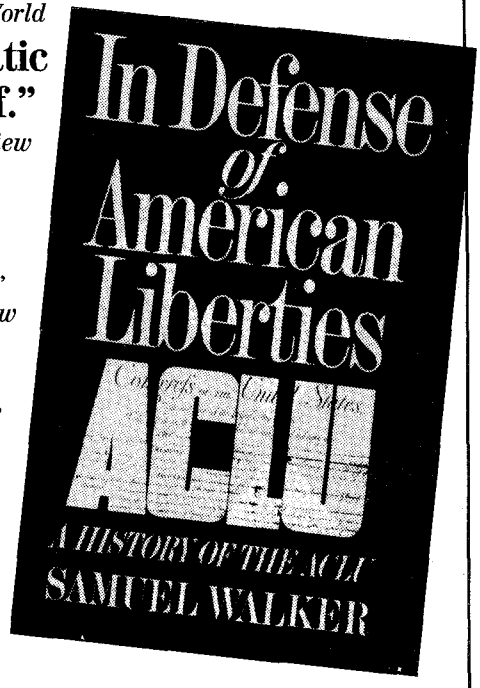

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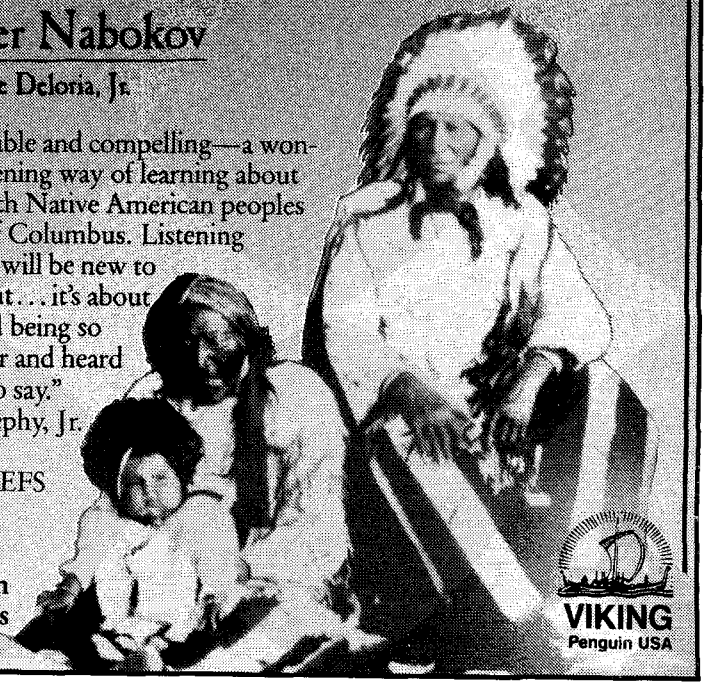

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stifling the propensity to be attached to things and persons. According to this tradition, the Buddha showed the Way, and it is now up to us to follow it, not always as easy as it may sound, inasmuch as it is exceedingly difficult to detach oneself from lovers and children and parents, or to be indifferent to their sufferings. The Greater Vehicle involves the mediating action of the Bodhisattva, a being of advanced enlightenment who postpones or defers his or her own Nirvanization until everyone, in a single cosmic transfer, passes collectively into the Nirvanic state. It was with Mahayana teaching that Buddhism began to take on a doctrinal and in some measure a philosophical complexity, largely, in my view, because its proponents were obliged to defend their doctrine against the shrewd dialecticians of traditional Indian philosophy. Under Mahayana, Buddhism became a cosmological religion, and there began to be a separation between the professionals, so to speak, and the rest, who were not always able to follow the arguments but more commonly merely said some prayers and tried to lead decent lives. Tantra goes beyond Mahayana by a factor vastly greater than that by which Mahayana goes beyond Theravada. Indeed, it credits itself with subsuming all the texts and teachings that went before, embedding them in systems of an immensity to awe the mind. It required a priesthood able to keep track of the rituals, exercises, codes and cosmologies well beyond anything dreamt by Mahayana. As priest, I suppose, the Tantric specialist was already detached from the commonplace world of those in whose favor or for whose benefit he supposed himself to be acting. But it was a peculiarity of Tantra that direct mystical contact was sought, and what Bharati terms "sexual contact" was a means to this—a means to emulate deities and their consorts in the intense and transfigurative unions we see depicted in Buddhist art. It is, if executed rightly, the paradigm method of overcoming opposition, of becoming one with what, before the act was undertaken, was another.

Needless to say, with the immense conceptual expansion of Buddhism under Tantra, there is a corresponding modification in the use of basic terms, not least of all "wisdom" and "compassion." The handsome and stunningly informative catalogue that accompanies "Wisdom and Compassion" (and that bears the very title), the exhibition magnificently installed in the I.B.M. Galleries until December 28, uses as its cover and its frontispiece an image from a magnificent *tangka,* which shows a blue Buddha and his fiery red consort interlocked in a powerful sexual embrace. It typifies the so-called "Father-Mother" (*Yab-Yum*) format of Tibetan art, found in *tangkas* (hanging paintings that can be rolled and unrolled) and in metal or wooden figures and figurines. Compassion, we are now told, is "the male principle" and Wisdom "the female principle." The sexual union of male and female is in effect the merging of wisdom and compassion as an emblem of the Nirvanic state. Politically, I suppose, for whatever such a speculation by an outsider like me may be worth, Compassion is Mahayana and Wisdom Theravada, with Tantra as their union, symbolizing through sex their fusion, their individual overcoming and opposition, and then emancipation, as Buddhism understands this.

Be this as it may, on some level of symbolic interpretation the graphic depiction of sexual energy here is overwhelming. The coupling is strenuous (or it would be for humans) and athletic. The pair is standing, with the female's left leg pressed stiffly against the right leg of her partner, as if in a kind of dance step, such as a glide. Her right leg is slung over his left thigh. Her left arm is thrown around his neck and her right arm seems to wave a ritual object in the air. The contact seems almost entirely genital, inasmuch as the male, though possessed of twelve arms, does not seem to be holding his fiery consort with any of them; and even if one pair of arms does surround her, it holds, in each hand, a scepter of some sort. Each of the remaining arms displays a ritual object, including the flayed skin of an elephant, which the male seems to hold as a kind of curtain behind his back. The artist has managed to show the bodies as pressed against each other, and to show especially the female's passion: Her head is flung back as she looks up into her mate's eyes (of which there are three in the face that looks out at *us*, over her head, though the male in fact has several faces, which look out in different directions and are of different colors). Their teeth are bared, their lips are parted, their jaws are clenched in tension. The female seems measurably more ecstatic than the male, which may be due to the fact that it is the mark of the Tantric sexual discipline that males practice retention of the seminal fluid, which may be greatly to the female's orgasmic benefit (the fact that the Hindu depiction is consistent with ejaculation may explain the relaxed sexuality of Khajuraho). Their act is a kind of "act." It transpires on a lotus-shaped podium, on which their heavy feet trample figures one supposes symbolize the contraries of wisdom and compassion. Male and female are alike elaborately ornamented. The male wears a diadem of skulls, one hand holds three severed heads. The catalogue will identify all the objects held by the male's twelve hands and the female's one free hand. The amazement is that this great dance of sexual oneness transcends, artistically, the arcane iconography, which only priests and scholars know how to unriddle. The couple is spotlighted, as it were, by an ornamental mandala, which has the effect of making the embrace a star turn, which in a sense it is. The star couple is surrounded by a chorus, as it were, or an audience (the two being transforms of each other in certain theories of the history of the theater). There are seventy-odd figures, some of them couples with consorts, enacting in their own right the ecstatic drama of the main couple. It is a cosmic sex-dance, dense with meaning, a vision of unity, a metaphor for what holds the world together and overcomes all difference. It is a stupendous vision. One has to be reminded of what Nietzsche describes in *The Birth of Tragedy* as "the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence."

One now learns that the male figure here is the Buddha himself, in one of his forms, that of Shamvara. In the Tantric system, there are Buddhas and Buddhas, Buddha-worlds and Buddha-worlds. The *historical* Buddha, the wise thinker who discovered the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, is but one of them. If our conception of Buddhism is defined by that marvelous being, we are bound to feel somewhat restless with the multiple limbs, the flayed skins (sometimes human), the skulls, the scalps, the blood, even the exhibitionistic sex. We have in any case come a long way from the direct and simple propositions that make Buddhism so attractive a teaching, or from those affecting dialogues between Buddha and his follower and sidekick, Ananda. Some of this feeling survives in certain of the *tangkas*. There is a very moving one that shows the death of Buddha, for example, in a setting so lovely and tranquil that by itself it almost succeeds in detaching the viewer from the power of death (and how different it is from the gory death scenes paradigmatic to Christianity!). The Buddha is lying on one elbow on a dais set in the midst of a verdant landscape, a garden really, with a

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pond and ornamental trees and paired birds. There are whorled Chinese clouds of incense rising into the blue sky, and rainbows wave in the air, as if the world has been freshened by rain. The Buddha, in a dotted pink robe, is of course larger than anyone else, and he is saying his last words to his already mourning followers, whom he has told to work out their salvations diligently. Clearly, they have a long way to go, for the fact that they are weeping is evidence that they are still attached. My sense is that the detachment of the Buddha is symbolically embodied in the very beauty of the day on which he has chosen to leave the world: The world he leaves is so intoxicatingly lovely that one must feel he has determined to quit it when we would be most attached to it. By contrast to his shaken followers, he is supremely calm. It is a very affecting image, defining one boundary of a system, the other boundary of which is exemplified in the sexual dance of Shamvara-Buddha and his flushed, tooth-grinding consort, clinging to him as to a tree. The distance from boundary to boundary tells the story of Buddhism's evolution. Perhaps the incapacity for detachment, demonstrated in the weeping monks of the first image, reveals the extent to which we all need help, and hence the theoretical generating of helpers and the vast hierarchies of priestly specialists is the institutional response to the need. Nirvana is very far away, except perhaps through sexual shortcuts.

This has been proclaimed the Year of Tibet, and the unprecedented exhibition of Tibetan art is part of a larger celebration, a way of drawing the world's attention to an embattled tradition and a world under siege. It hardly need be said that the works assembled here were never intended as art to be looked at by visitors who then turn the corner and look at something else—like the exhibition "Pleasures of Paris: Daumier to Picasso," composed of images from dance halls and circuses and cafes, also on display at the I.B.M. Galleries, making an odd worldly pendant to the religious art from Tibet. The *tangkas* or the gilded devotional figures are for the most part anonymous expressions of the same spirit that unites artist, work and audience in a field of devotion to which we, as aesthetic sightseers, are altogether strangers. What is astonishing, however little one knows about the tradition, is the power exerted by so many of these works, awesome and even frightening in some instances, gracious and reassuring in some

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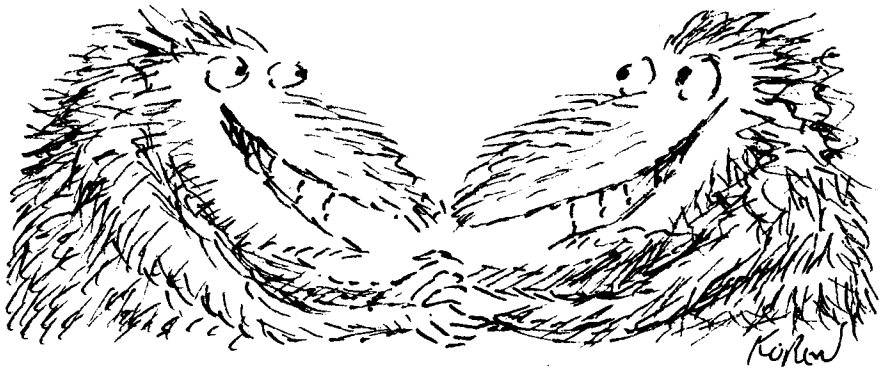

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others. There can be very few figures more ingratiating than the Green Tara, in gilt brass, about fifteen inches high, perched on a lotus in the form of an adolescent girl. Green Tara is an intercessor, a rescuer, a heeder of the cries of sufferers, and she is revered for her readiness to step in and offer relief in immediate and palpable ways. It is small consolation, I should think, adrift at sea or in the midst of flames, to be told that desire is the cause of suffering: One wants help right away. Green Tara, as a Bodhisattva, is a Buddhist counterpart to those *nothelfige Heiligen* of Christianity that desperate Christians call upon in their straits: Saint Roch, Saint Blaise, Saint Barbara or Margaret or Eustace. The delicacy, fragility and beauty of this young girl somehow underscore her power and her grace: She radiates perfect composure and confidence from beneath her elegant crown. Green Tara is a response to a need for deities immediately accessible to human summoning, without the mediation of priests. The great sexual dances may be for our benefit in the cosmological long run, but there is little day-to-day evidence of their effectiveness in the flaming world. Green Tara is among those who fill the void, and in this exquisite figurine she reflects the vulnerability of those she will help: Green Tara is somehow one of us. We must admire the skill with which the sculptor has achieved the impression of diaphanousness in her rippling garments. In *The Pillow Book*, Lady Sei Shonagon records a pilgrimage to Nara, where the priest was so good-looking she found herself distracted from otherworldly preoccupations. She thought it dangerous that priests be handsome for that reason. I felt somewhat the same with Green Tara. Buddhism is supposed to stultify craving, but I craved this marvelous sculpture, and were I to call upon Green Tara, it would be for this image of herself. Like everyone else, I have a long way to go.

This is a good show to visit with a companion. That way, you can work out some of the meanings together—though not too many, for each piece is as a general rule quite complex. You may not wish to do more, for many of the images are repellent. Nothing in art, however, quite matches the sexually energized couples in Tantric imagery, and in an era in which the relationship of art, sex and religion has become muddled, it is worth contemplating a tradition in which they fit together harmoniously, each a metaphor for the power of the rest. As a force and metaphor, sex has no equal: The fundamental things apply as time goes by. □

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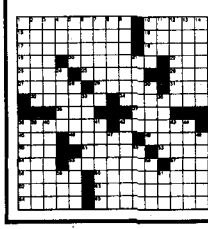

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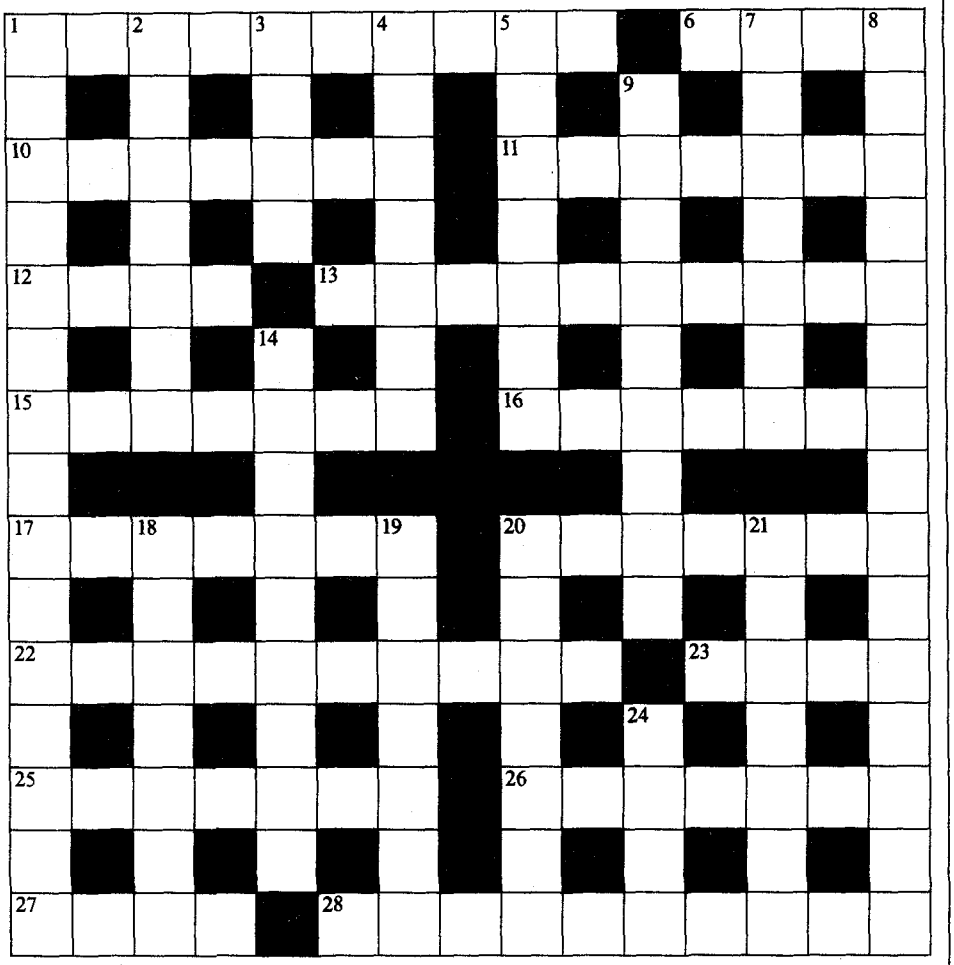

ACROSS

1 Once like Lobo? What are they now, if not horrifying? (10)
6 One takes the foremost part as a terrible ruler, but in vain! (4)
10 See 24 down
11 Country people, surrounded by song. (7)
12 Dines on food from the east? (4)
13 Is such work-cessation commonly stupid? Not necessarily, but you'll leave them speechless if you do. (6,4)
15 Al fresco in opera, perhaps. (4,3)
16 His words were appreciated by Savoyards. (7)
17 Not exactly true, but the tune comes back in the old country. (7)
20 Sir, it comes back to the Emperor as quite a dish! (7)
22 Utilized by legendary night riders. (Is nothing most likely to change in building material?) (10)
23 Let out of a sort of 16, and you might be put into it, if tar. (4)
25 One reputedly lies in a couple of articles, and is found around a similar article. (7)
26 The home of Tom Water in Paris? (7)
27 Is paying such an indirect tax a moral obligation? (4)
28 How I deduce everything in New York? Like Hell! (10)

DOWN

1 Clean to a point, the bird of peace goes right with the directors of what the sailor might get in a storm. (6,9)
2 and 18 Tangled thread with East Brazilian diplomacy? What to do with the mob! (4,3,4,3)
3 Act as an attendant for the old caroler. (4)
4 The match perhaps shows what the middleweight must be to the heavyweight. (7)
5 It takes an age to make music, getting rid of the original. (7)
7 They imply nothing's gained if you don't do it. (7)
8 Only partly describing the Gelett Burgess cow if you don't want things too far out . . . (4,3,3,5)
9 . . . and bring me up with a ringer on his sort, to touch things up. (9)
14 She might have been used to milk at one time, (9)
18 See 2
19 Unfinished statement concerning what paintings consist of, especially for the skilled worker. (7)
20 Concerning one way a kid might go to school, we should do with the paper. (7)
21 Do this to the cad, with a bunch of feathers possibly from Raleigh! (7)
24 and 10 across What might cause you to say Ouch! putting pegs into the ground, although using great care. (11)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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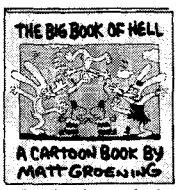

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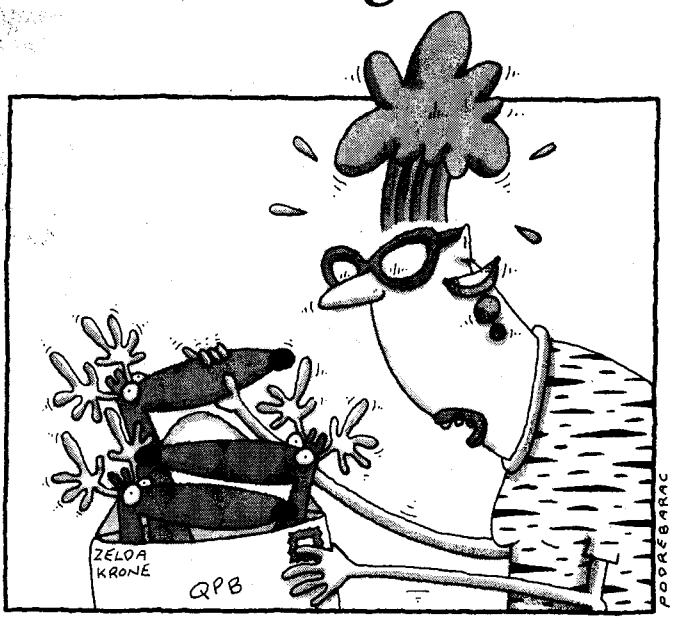

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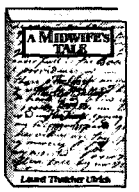

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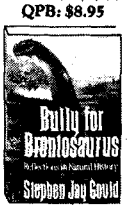

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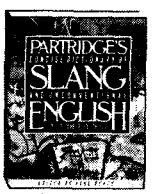

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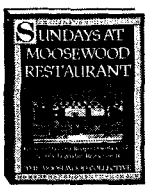

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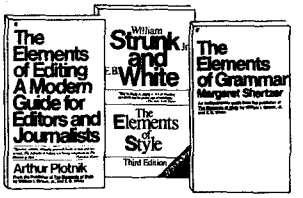
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